

Four killed in Iran explosions

TEHRAN (AP) — Four people were killed and three were wounded Tuesday in two explosions of suspicious objects in a suburban community west of Tehran, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported. Two brothers and a third man were killed instantly in the first explosion Tuesday morning near a paint factory in a suburb of Karaj, about 40 kilometres west of the capital, the agency said. Three hours later, a second explosion killed a police guard and wounded two men under his command, IRNA said. It listed a third person as wounded but gave no details. The agency said "suspicious objects" exploded in both cases, but gave no further indication if sabotage was involved.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية والراي

Yugoslav scientist says Kosovo bodies not massacred

PRISTINA (R) — The head of the Yugoslav forensic team examining the bodies of 40 ethnic Albanians who the West says were massacred by Serb police said on Tuesday they bore no signs of having been executed. "Not a single body bears any sign of execution," Sasa Dobricanin told Reuters. "The bodies were not massacred," Dobricanin said the autopsy would probably take three to four days. "It is going very, very slowly," he said. He said, however, that it was already clear that William Walker, head of the international monitors in Kosovo, had been mistaken. Walker had accused the Serb police of executing at least 20 of the victims, who were killed on Friday. "But the main thing which is already obvious is that Walker was wrong when he said these people were massacred," Dobricanin said (see earlier stories on page 4).

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Hundreds of thousands greet King on his return



His Majesty King Hussein, accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Noor, greets His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan after his return to Amman (AP photo). The King offers a prayer of thanksgiving following his safe return to Jordan (Photo by Youssef Allam)

Jordanians undeterred by rain, weather in celebrating King's return

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Neither the rainfall nor the chilly weather could prevent hundreds of thousands of Jordanians from thronging the streets to welcome His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday, following his arrival in Amman after undergoing six months of cancer chemotherapy in the U.S.

Men, women, children, boy scouts, students and traditional folk groups from all over the country celebrated the King's return by singing, dancing, beating drums and waving banners that said "Long live Al Hussein," "Thank God for His Majesty's return" and "We sacrifice our soul and blood for you [King Hussein]."

In the streets of downtown, crowds challenged driving rain and cold weather, chanting "Hashmi Hashmi," a popular song honouring King Hussein's origin from Hashem, the grandfather of Prophet Mohammad, while shopkeepers offered sweets and coffee to passers-by and a folk dancing troupe twirled swords and played bagpipes.

"Look at the rain, even heaven is celebrating His Majesty's blessed return. No words can describe this moment," one vendor told the Jordan Times, while he danced carefree in his drenched clothes.

The government Saturday officially announced a state of drought and plans to cope with the problem after months of low amounts of rainfall.

King Hussein, piloting a plane, which was escorted by 12 military jets, landed at the Marka military airport.

The rain did not stop the King from standing up through his limousine's large sunroof to wave to the jubilant crowds as he made his way through a 25-kilometre route to his home in western Amman.

Jordanians lined the route to catch a glimpse of their King.

Children were heedless of the rain while they were clapping, singing and some of them, crying.

"I'm crying because for once I thought I might lose our King and father," said one orphaned child, his cheeks flushed red from tears, rain and cold.

Well-wishers sang and threw flowers as the Royal motorcade passed through the streets decorated with coloured lights, flags and banners proclaiming "Welcome Back Al Hussein" and "Yoo Retom Like the Sool to The Body."

Downtown shopkeepers said they were optimistic that their businesses will flourish with the King's return.

"With His Majesty's homecoming, I have a strong feeling that my sales are about to improve after months of an uncertain economic situation," said a boutique owner.

On Sunday, King Hussein, in an address to the nation from London, declared his full recovery and announced that he planned to launch a comprehensive review of the country's progress and challenges facing it.

"Whatever His Majesty decides to do, we will be supporting him all the way as he is our King and leader, and we believe he will achieve the best for our nation," a young lawyer said in a comment on the King's announcement.

King Hussein left Jordan

in mid-July to undergo treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The 63-year-old King received a clean bill of health after a stem-cell transplant at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, in the U.S.

Soldiers trying to keep eager crowds at bay along the sidewalks yesterday were unable to convince an old woman that, like everyone else, she had to greet King Hussein from the sidewalk. After minutes of gestures and negotiations, the good-natured soldiers gave in, and the hajjah remained in the street as motorcade cruised by.

Buildings were decorated with the King's pictures, huge flags and series of flashing lights.

Bedouin leaders pitched tents in some streets and brought in camels and sheep to slaughter in a traditional sacrificial gesture.

Talk shows on the radio and television have been swamped with calls from Jordanians declaring allegiance to the King.

Al Hashmiyah Square and public parks were jammed with celebrants, who included members of the Circassian and Iraqi Assyrian communities dancing and singing traditional songs.

Emotions ran high also in Palestinian refugee camps, where hundreds of people joined the celebrations and chanted slogans praising King Hussein.

Similar activities took place in all districts around the Kingdom as part of the celebrations, which started long before the leader's planned arrival, the largest in Amman since September 1992, when the country welcomed King Hussein after his first cancer surgery in the U.S.

King welcomed home by Royal family, foreign leaders and citizens

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein returned to Jordan yesterday to a jubilant reception from his family, local and foreign dignitaries and citizens who have been eager to see the Hashemite leader after six months of absence from the Kingdom.

Moments after piloting his G-4 plane into Marka military airport, the King stepped down from the aircraft and prayed.

It was the first time he had touched Jordanian soil since he left the country last July for the U.S., where he underwent chemotherapy to treat non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

Accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Noor, who has been at the King's side throughout his half-year ordeal, King Hussein embraced his family and was welcomed by scores of senior officials, Parliament members, diplomats and other dignitaries.

The King was also greeted by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani and Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who came just to participate in Jordan's celebrations of the King's homecoming.

The King's aircraft was escorted as it entered Jordan's airspace by 12 F-16 and Mirage jet fighters.

Speaking to reporters shortly after his return, King Hussein announced that there is "a lot to be done" to consolidate the future of Jordan.

"Every now and then we have to review, we have to see what needs to be done to consolidate the country to make people feel more comfortable and more confident in the future," said the King in his first statement to the media after arriving.

The King expressed his deep appreciation and thanks to the Jordanian people

for the overwhelming affection and welcome accorded him following his extended absence.

"I appreciate everything that my deputy did while I was away... giving it his best," said the King, acknowledging HRH Crown Prince Hassan, who stood at his side.

He said "the government so far has done a very good job."

King Hussein said the forthcoming decisions would be taken "here [in Amman], after study and deliberation, God willing."

"The coming stage requires careful study so that the right decisions can be taken with a sense of responsibility for the present and the future and for the Jordanian people."

Speaking on his months of treatment, King Hussein thanked Queen Noor, whom he said "has been through a lot... and has had to deal with unpleasant surprises."

"The fact is that my small Jordanian family was with me and beside me, in particular Her Majesty Queen Noor, who suffered with me a great deal as I did in the face of the unpleasant surprises of illness."

The King also expressed his pride in the Hashemite family saying, "My brother Prince Mohammad and my sister Princess Basma have donated blood for me as did my children, particularly Prince Hanzeh, who is not among us today as he is undergoing training at Sandhurst military academy. They have not left me a single moment throughout the whole period."

King Hussein praised the Jordanian family's unity, saying, "We hope that the future will hold everything good for us."

He expressed deep pride in his brothers, the leaders and kings of the Arab and friendly nations who visited him in the U.S. and maintained contact with him.

Monarch receives messages of congratulations from world leaders

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday received telephone calls from Syrian President Hafez Assad and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz, who congratulated him on his recovery and safe return home.

President Assad and Prince Abdullah expressed their heartfelt congratulations to the King and the Jordanian people and wished the King continued good health and happiness.

King Hussein expressed thanks and appreciation to President Assad and Prince Abdullah for their congratulations and brotherly feelings.

The King also received messages from several world leaders congratulating him on his recovery and safe return home.

The King received cables from Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali, Sudanese President Omar Hassan Bashir, Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The leaders expressed their heartfelt congratulations to the King and wished him continued good health and happiness.

King Hussein received a message from French President Jacques Chirac congratulating him on his recovery and safe return home.

In his message, President Chirac said: "I would like to share with the Jordanian people their joy over your return home. I am extremely happy with your recovery. The Middle East and the Arab World are more than at any time in the past facing a crossroads, and they are looking forward towards peace and stability and are in need of your wisdom, advice and initiative."

"Your Majesty were able during the Wye River negotiations to convince others of the need for peace through negotiations and for guaranteeing the future and security in Palestine as well as in Israel, but the last few months have regrettably missed that goal," said the French president.

Welcoming the King's visit to France, to take place this year, President Chirac said that France is proud and happy over the expected visit, adding: "You have touched the hearts of the French people, and I would like to express my deep appreciation and true affection and that of my wife to you and to Her Majesty Queen Noor."

The King also received congratulatory cables from Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid, and the director general of the Civil Defence Department, Major General Theeb Maani.

Minister General Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashid Al Maktoum is due to visit Jordan today to convey to the King the greetings of the emir of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, and vice president, prime minister and ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Maktoum Ben Rashid Al Maktoum.

Sheikh Mohammad will be accompanied by a high-level delegation.

Another senior Bahrain official is expected to arrive today in Amman to congratulate the King on his recovery and safe return.

The King's return brought around 250 foreign journalists to Amman to report on the homecoming. World networks like CNN had live coverage of the King's arrival and motorcade through the capital.

Ex-U.N. official says sanctions on Iraq amount to 'genocide'

PARIS (R) — The former coordinator of the United Nations oil-for-food programme in Iraq said on Tuesday U.N. sanctions amounted to genocide and ending them would do more to weaken the Iraqi leadership than maintaining them.

Denis Halliday, an Irishman and self-described pacifist who resigned in protest at U.N. policies in Iraq last September after more than 30 years at the agency, praised a French plan to ease international sanctions on Baghdad.

But, in an appearance before the French National Assembly's Franco-Iraq Study Group, he said U.N. members must do even more to assist Baghdad and urged them to help finance Iraq's reconstruction, which he said

would cost \$50-60 billion.

He also urged the United Nations to postpone Iraq's reparations payments, imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, "until the death of Iraqi children ceases."

"I don't like the word genocide. I think it's perhaps too dramatic. But the fact is, can you find a better word to describe this sort of catastrophe?" he told Reuters following his parliamentary remarks.

Halliday, 57, is touring Europe to lobby for an end to the U.N. sanctions, which he blames for the death of 5,000 to 6,000 Iraqis a month and as many as 600,000 children since 1990.

He was in Rome last week and heads for Britain on Saturday.

Paris has proposed phasing

out the U.N. ban on Iraqi oil sales, replacing obtrusive weapons inspections with a looser system of arms monitoring, and continuing supervision of how Iraq spends the money it earns from oil exports.

Halliday said sanctions had only strengthened Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "If the embargo was removed, Saddam Hussein would be weakened and in due course an opposition can perhaps grow within the country," he told the parliamentary group.

The Paris plan has been warmly praised by Security Council members China and Russia but got a cooler reception from Britain and the United States, which want to be sure Iraq has destroyed all its weapons of mass destruction before lifting the embargo.

"The responsibility for this chaos must be shared by all of us who are members of the United Nations, and particularly the United States and the United Kingdom," which bombed Iraq last month over its refusal to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors, said Halliday.

"I can't imagine what [British Prime Minister] Tony Blair was doing, because he seems to have isolated himself not only in Europe but in Britain," he added.

French deputy Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin, who organised Tuesday's hearing, said six deputies would travel to Iraq on Jan. 28 for a week-long visit to review the humanitarian situation and assess the damage from last month's bombings.

Second break-in at offices of Barak's advisor

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Capitol Hill offices of a prominent Democratic pollster advising Ehud Barak, a candidate for prime minister of Israel, apparently have been burglarized for the second time in a week, according to Metropolitan Police.

An employee of Greenberg Quinlan Inc. discovered the apparent break-in about 6:45 a.m., said police spokesman Sgt. Joe Gentile.

Police say the offices were broken into sometime after 4 p.m. Monday.

"It appears burglars entered the offices through a side skylight window on the second floor," Gentile said.

The firm, which is advising the campaign of Barak, a leading opposition candidate to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was burglarized last week. Netanyahu's Likud Party denied any involvement in the earlier incident which had been dubbed the "Israeli Watergate" in Washington and Jerusalem, in a reference to the burglary of Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate office building that led to President Richard Nixon's 1974 resignation. It had been the most recent in a series of break-ins at homes and offices of Barak aides and advisers.

Khatami seen as winner in row with state television

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's state television came under fire on Tuesday over an interview with a conservative cleric who had accused backers of President Mohammad Khatami of being behind a series of murders of moderate intellectuals.

A top state committee condemned the television station for the interview and demanded that those responsible for the programme be punished. Iranian analysts saw the decision as a victory for the moderate president over the conservative-run state media and another step forward for his liberal political and cultural reforms.

The interview, which included no rebuttal, had provoked a strong reaction by moderate groups. Khatami's cabinet banned Ali Larjani, the head of the television and radio, from attending its meetings and demanded an apology.

Khatami welcomed the ruling of the committee, set up in agreement with Larjani, and suggested that the media chief was again welcome to attend cabinet meetings, the television said.

Khatami, who has advocat-

ed granting greater liberties, also expressed hope in a statement that Iran's "atmosphere of criticism and freedom of speech... would not become a place for baseless judgements or libel and abusive language," it added.

Iranian political analysts said the ruling against the television, whose head is named by Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was unprecedented.

Khamenei outcasts Khatami.

"This is another step forward for Khatami's reforms... Up to now, the radio and television had obstinately carried one-sided programmes without any accountability to the public," said Iraj Jamshidi, editor of the business daily *Abrar-e Eghtesadi*.

Conservatives still hold key levers of power — including the armed and security forces, courts and state media — despite Khatami's wide popularity after his 1997 landslide election.

"This is the first time the government, which does not control the radio and television, has managed to force the head of these media to say he

did not know about a programme in order to avoid further pressure from public opinion, the press and Khatami's supporters," Jamshidi told Reuters.

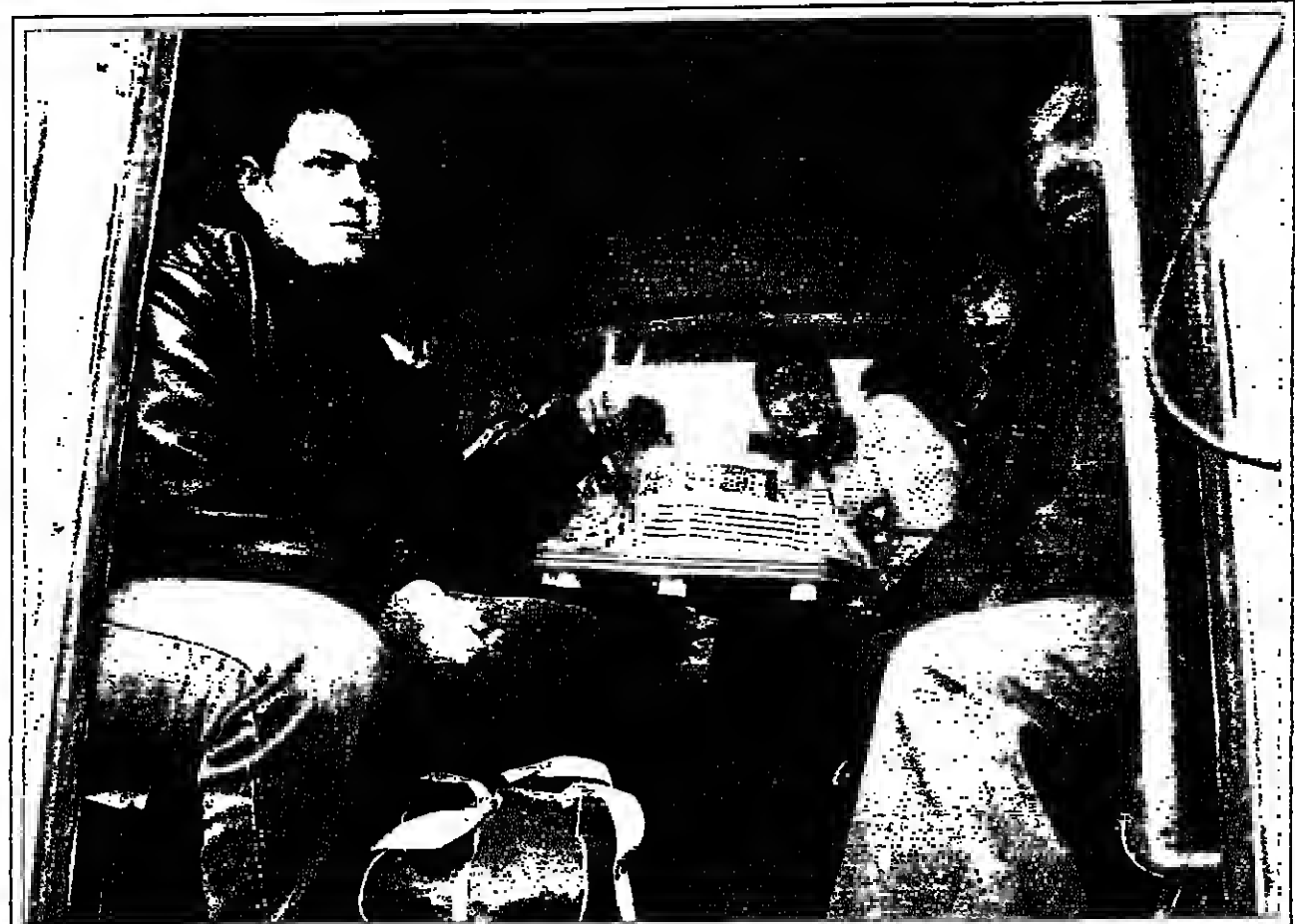
The state committee said Larjani was not informed about the interview, which was seen by moderates as an attempt by conservatives to deflect charges that the murders were part of a plan by hardliners to destabilise Khatami's government.

Ten people, including agents of the conservative-run secret police, have been held for alleged involvement in the murders.

At least two outspoken dissidents and two liberal writers were killed by death-squads. A third author died under mysterious circumstances and a fourth is missing and presumed dead.

A committee set up by Khatami to investigate the murders said on Sunday that none of Iran's mainstream factions was behind the killings.

On Monday Khamenei called on conservatives and moderates to end their bitter row over the political murders.



PALESTINIAN PRISONERS RELEASED: Palestinian prisoners Tuesday carry a model of the Dome of the Rock while they wait to be allowed to go home after they were released from an Israeli jail. Israel agreed to free some 30 Palestinian prisoners as a gesture of goodwill for the 'Eid Al Fitr festival marking the end of Ramadan (Reuters photo)

PKK will attack Turkish cities, spokesman says

AITHENS (AP) — A Kurdish rebel leader is threatening intensified attacks inside Turkey and says his group will target major cities.

Kani Yilmaz, identified as European spokesman for the Kurdish Labour Party, or PKK, made the remarks in an interview to the Athens daily *Ethnos*. Kani Yilmaz is an alias used by Faysal Dumaychi, who has in the past served as the PKK's European spokesman, according to the Kurdish sources.

"The expansion of the war inside Turkey must be considered certain," he told *Ethnos*.

The 15-year fight for autonomy by Kurdish rebels in southeastern Turkey moved onto the international stage in November following the arrest of the PKK's leader in Rome.

Abdullah Ocalan sought political asylum and tried to

gather political support in Europe.

But he left Italy last week for an undisclosed location.

Greek newspapers reported Ocalan was in Belarus, but his precise whereabouts are unknown.

The conflict between the PKK and Turkish military has killed about 37,000 people. But Ocalan suggested the PKK would call off its armed struggle and seek political pressure on Turkey, which regards the PKK as a terrorist group.

The comments by Yilmaz in the *Ethnos* interview, however, give an entirely different picture of the PKK's plans.

According to the newspaper, Yilmaz said Ankara, Istanbul and the coastal city of Izmir will be targeted by the group. A final decision will be made at a PKK conference next month, he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Iran wants to buy U.S. commodities'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Iran in December placed an order for more than \$500 million worth of U.S. grain and sugar, which is under consideration by the U.S. government. The Washington Post said Tuesday. Some administration officials told the daily the grain purchase order may be an artifice, aimed at setting the precedent of an approved transaction without consummating a deal, since Iran could purchase some of the commodities from other countries at cheaper prices. The request, submitted to the Treasury Department on Dec. 14, is for two million tonnes of wheat, 400,000 tonnes of corn, 300,000 tonnes of rice, 400,000 tonnes of sugar and 200,000 tonnes of soy bean meal, the daily said.

Supporters of dissident Iranian arrested

TEHRAN (AFP) — Several supporters of dissident Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, the disgraced former cleric to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, have been arrested in the central city of Esfahan, a newspaper reported Tuesday. "Several people were arrested after shouting slogans in favour of Ayatollah Montazeri," said the radical newspaper *Salam*. It said the arrests took place on Monday after prayers for 'Eid Al Fitr marking the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan. The paper said some 70,000 worshippers had attended the prayer service in Esfahan on Monday addressed by Ayatollah Jaleddin Taheri, a senior cleric considered a supporter of Montazeri and reformist President Mohammad Khatami.

Irish, Israeli PMs hold talks

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern met Tuesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the start of a two-day visit which will also include talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. As Ahern arrived at the prime minister's office in Jerusalem, Netanyahu said he would give him a message to deliver to Arafat to the effect that if the Palestinians stick to their commitments under October's Wye River agreement then there could be progress in the peace talks.

Hostages held in Yemen over jailed tribesman

SANAA (AFP) — The tribal kidnappers of a Dutch family and British couple in Yemen are demanding the release of a jailed tribesman, a Dutch diplomat said Tuesday. "The kidnappers' demand, it seems, is for the release of a tribe member in prison," said Pieter Dorst, deputy head of mission at the Netherlands embassy. "The [Yemeni] government is in touch with them [the kidnappers]," Dorst told AFP. He declined to give details on the mediation efforts, in the second such kidnapping this month.

Ultra-Orthodox rabbi unveils Palestinian peace proposal

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An ultra-Orthodox rabbi put forward a radical peace proposal Tuesday suggesting Israel allow the creation of a Palestinian state with Arab east Jerusalem as its capital in exchange for Palestinian acceptance of massive Jewish settlement of the West Bank.

The plan was drawn up by Rabbi Yaakov Shulevitz, a close aide to the influential spiritual leader of the Degel Hatorah party, Rabbi Eliezer Shach.

"This project is aimed at reassuring the [Jewish] settlers while remaining loyal to the thinking of Rabbi Shach, Shulevitz told AFP.

The peace proposal calls for Israel to permit the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.

It foresees a major expansion of the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem to include nearby Jewish settlements on the West Bank while at the same time

granting Palestinians control over Arab sectors of occupied east Jerusalem.

In exchange, Israel would demand the right for several hundred thousand more Jews to live on the West Bank under Israeli jurisdiction.

The plan as outlined by Shulevitz did not mention precise boundaries for the Palestinian state or specific areas for settlement by Jews on the West Bank.

"Rabbi Shach has never opposed the

principle of a withdrawal from the West Bank," he said.

"According to Rabbi Shach, the West Bank is a territory occupied militarily by Israel and not given by God, so a withdrawal poses no theological problems," he said.

Degel Hatorah is one of two ultra-Orthodox factions in the United Torah Judaism Party which makes up part of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

12:00 "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"
01:00 "Cartoon 'Red Beard'"
01:30 Feature Film "Heck's Way Home"
15:00 The American Chat Show
15:45 "Circus"
16:15 "Vid Kids"
15:00 "French Varieties"
18:15 "Omar Ben Abdul Aziz"
19:00 "Le Journal"
19:15 "French programme"
19:30 "News Headlines"
19:35 Comedy — 2 Point 4 Children
20:00 Envoy Special of French Prog.
20:30 "Drama NYPD"
21:30 Mini Series "playing the Field" Eps. 4
22:00 "News in English"
22:00 Feature Film "With a song in My Heart"

PRAYER TIMES

05:10Fajr
06:31Sunrise/Duha
11:46Dhuhr
14:38Asr
17:02Maghreb
18:23Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith. Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366

Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751

Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138

Church of Presentation, Sweith.
Tel. 5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757

The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679

The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052

The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331

The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

It will be cold, cloudy and

rainy with snow expected to

fall over areas that are 1200

metres above sea level. Winds

westerly moderate to active. In

Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy

with expected scattered show-

ers. Winds northerly moderate

and seas calm.

Amman04/09

Aqaba11/20

Deserts04/11

Jordan Valley11/18

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 08, Aqaba 20

Humidity readings: Amman

90 per cent. Aqaba 35 per

cent.

Following are the tempera-

tures expected today in the fol-

lowing areas:

Ajloun03/10

Jerash04/11

Um Qays03/12

Madaba03/10

Petra02/12

Dead Sea10/20

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyib4620115
Dr. Wissam Hazyayin 4748563
Dr. Omar Yassin5336221

Dr. Khalid Abdo4657129

AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayadah Pharmacy5537004

Ruhal Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh (02)250080

Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:

Dr. Salah Saffarini (09)987565

Palestine Pharmacy (09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111

Civil Defence Department 5661111

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Civil Defence Emergency4630341

Fire Brigade4617101

Blood Bank4775121

Highway Police5343402

Traffic police4896390

Public Security Dept.4630321

Hotel Complaints5605800

Price Complaints5661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467

Amman Municipality Complaints4787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121

Overseas Calls0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101

Jordan Television4773111

Radio Jordan4774111

Water Authority5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co.4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53300

Queen Alia Int. Airport44-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199

The Islamic, Abdli5666131/7

Hussein Medical Centre 5856856

Luzmila4630195

Khalidi Maternity4642816

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362

Malhas, J. Amman4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani5607071

Shmeisani Hospital5607431

Jordan Hospital5607550

University Hospital5353444

Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9

Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4771013/3

Al-Bashir4775111/26

Army, Madra4891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital5157100

Amal Hospital5607155

Al Amal Cancer Centre 5333000

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital

(09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital

(09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

(02)275555

Roman Catholic Hospital

(02)272775

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

(02)7101372, (02)7103101

Rosary Sisters Hospital

(02)7102831, (02)7102011

Specialty Hospital (02)7103100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03

Jordan welcomes King Hussein



AT LONG LAST, KING HUSSEIN RETURNS TO JORDAN: Top row: From left to right, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Hashem, Princess Haya and Prince Ali Ben Hussein wait to greet His Majesty King Hussein at Marka Airport; King Hussein waves to Jordanians from his motorcade; His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Her Royal Highness Princess Basma wait to greet King Hussein: Row 2: From left to right, King Hussein waves to Jordanians from his motorcade; His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Her Royal Highness Princess Basma wait to greet King Hussein: Rows 3 and 4: Jordanians through the streets in anticipation of King Hussein's cruise through the city on the way to Bab Al Salam Palace (Photos by Yousef 'Allan, Associated Press and Agence France Presse)

Divided Security Council fails to pin massacre blame

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council has strongly condemned the massacre of 45 ethnic Albanians in Kosovo but pointedly refrained from pinning responsibility for the killings on any one party.

The council scheduled a second meeting to consider more condemnations and calls for Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to cooperate with war crimes investigators and peace monitors.

But there was virtually no chance the council would agree to "quick and effective U.N. intervention," which Albanian Foreign Minister Paskal Milo had asked for in a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Disagreements over how to handle the escalating crisis in Kosovo have resulted in a muted response from the 15-member council. Monday, an emergency meeting produced a press statement reflecting the few areas of agreement.

The statement called for a full investigation of the massacre, urged all parties to cooperate with the inter-

national war crimes tribunal, and called on the Yugoslav government to rescind its decision to expel the head of the peace mission in the embattled Serb province.

Diplomats were working late Monday on the draft of a more authoritative presidential statement to be considered by the council today. Some delegations, including the United States and France, were pushing for it to be stronger.

But Russia has close religious and cultural ties to the Serbs, and remains sympathetic to Belgrade's view that ethnic Albanians seeking independence have carried out terrorist attacks on its security forces.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Sergey Lavrov said Yugoslav authorities had already started investigating the massacre, and had every right to do so.

Last year, Moscow strongly condemned NATO threats to use airstrikes to pressure Milosevic to end his crackdown on ethnic Albanian rebels.

The United States and Britain have been quicker to blame the Serbs for

attacks on ethnic Albanians, who comprise an estimated 90 per cent of the 2 million people in Kosovo.

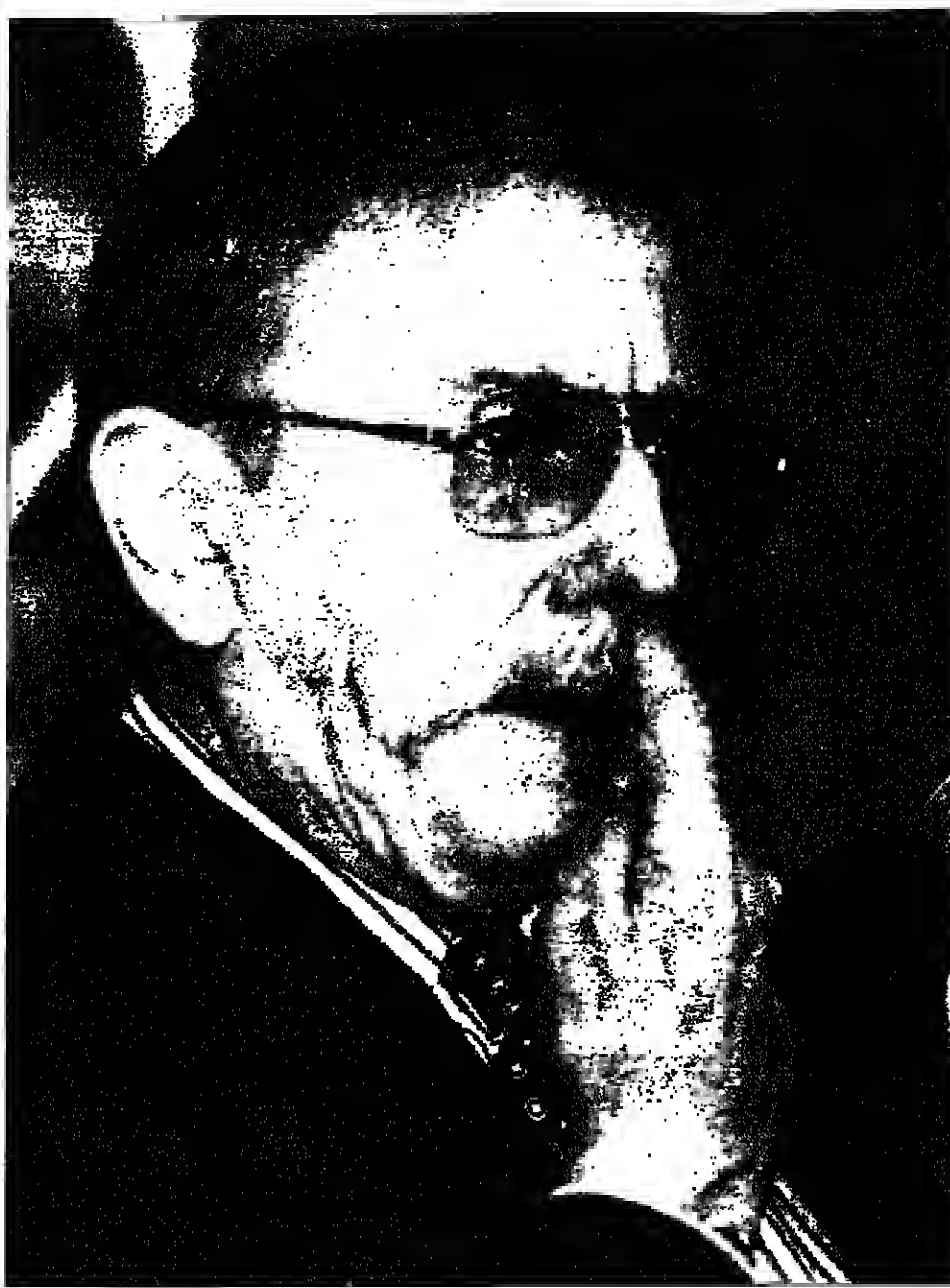
U.S. diplomat William Walker, who heads the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's peace mission in Kosovo, was ordered to leave Yugoslavia after he accused Serb forces of the massacre.

The United States wanted the council to condemn Yugoslavia's refusal Monday to allow chief U.N. war crimes prosecutor Louise Arbour to enter the country to investigate the atrocity in the village of Racak.

But diplomats said Russia and China blocked any mention of Arbour, saying they wanted to consult their governments.

Lavrov said Moscow had no official information on Arbour's failed attempt to enter Yugoslavia and wanted to verify reports that she was carrying NATO orders.

U.S. envoy Nancy Soderberg said the United States was still "pushing hard" for the council to support Arbour's mission.



File picture dated Oct. 23, 1998, showing U.S. diplomat William Walker, the head of the international OSCE verification mission for Kosovo, speaking to reporters in Pristina. Walker was declared 'persona non grata' by Belgrade after he had condemned the killings last Friday in the southern village of Racak in Kosovo as 'obviously a crime very much against humanity' (Reuters photo)

OSCE urges Belgrade to reverse Kosovo chief expulsion

VIENNA (AFP) — The OSCE pan-European security body called on Belgrade Tuesday to reverse its decision to expel Kosovo verification team chief William Walker, warning that the decision jeopardises the whole mission.

Amid international condemnation of the Yugoslav decision, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said however that Walker has no immediate plans to leave, despite Belgrade's order Monday.

"There are no plans right now for him to leave. We are still hoping that Mr Milosevic will reverse his decision," said Melissa Fleming, adding that OSCE chairman Knut Vollebæk may travel to Belgrade, after a meeting in Vienna Wednesday, to try to persuade the Yugoslav president to change his mind.

She added that the Kosovo mission could function without Walker if diplomatic efforts fail to change Belgrade's mind, since the U.S. diplomat has several deputies.

But she underlined the danger to the fragile peace brokered in Kosovo last October, of which the OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) is a key element.

"This is totally unacceptable. It puts the whole OSCE mission in jeopardy," she said.

The OSCE was changed, under a deal struck last October by U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke and Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, with deploying a 2,000-strong KVM in the troubled province to monitor compliance with U.N. resolutions.

So far more than 700 verifiers have been deployed, but the mission has been rocked by the escalation of violence in the last two weeks, including a hostage taking, the injury of two OSCE verifiers by sniper fire, and then the massacre of 45 ethnic Albanians in the village of Racak.

Belgrade's decision Monday to declare Walker "persona non grata," after his comments following the massacre of 45 ethnic Albanians last Friday near the Kosovo village of Racak, is however far more serious.

"President Slobodan Milosevic has challenged the international community in a way that may lead to increased violence in Kosovo. That could ruin chances for a peaceful dialogue," said Vollebæk, Norway's foreign minister, in Oslo.

Yugoslav Foreign Minister Zoran Djindjic sent a letter to Vollebæk late Monday, giving Walker 48 hours to leave the country.

In a telephone conversation

with Jovanovic Monday, Vollebæk strongly urged Belgrade to reconsider the expulsion decision. "But so far, I have seen no willingness to do so on their part," Vollebæk said.

Vollebæk said he had been discussing the issue with the foreign ministers of the United States, Russia and Germany. He is to meet in Vienna Wednesday with the other members of the OSCE troika of past, present and future chairmen, Poland's Bronislaw Geremek and Austria's Wolfgang Schuessel.

The OSCE spokeswoman said a lot depends on diplomatic efforts over the next day or two to persuade Belgrade to reverse its decision.

The United Nations, United States and Russia have led international calls on Belgrade to review its decision.

Asked what would happen if Walker is compelled to leave, she told AFP: "He has several deputies. Of course it doesn't function as well. They need a head. But it will function and it will continue to do its work."

As to whether a new head could be named to replace Walker, she added: "That's speculation. We're going to stick with the head of mission that we've appointed."

Bleak holiday for Jakarta's homeless and army

JAKARTA (R) — Most Indonesians celebrated the end of the Muslim month of fasting at home with family Tuesday, but for the capital's beggars and armed forces it was another day on the streets under the drenching tropical rain.

"I can't return to my village because I don't have any money," said Desmina, 40, who begs in the elite suburb of Menteng.

"I feel pained and bitter because I left behind eight children and many grandchildren... It hurts to see other people celebrating the holidays with their family."

Eid al-Fitr celebrates the end of Ramadan and comes with Indonesia in the grip of its worse economic crisis in 30 years, millions of people now in abject poverty.

Desmina, who worked as a labourer on a farm, left her village for Jakarta a year ago

with one daughter and two nieces when food at home became scarce.

She manages to get between 3,000 (35 U.S. cents) and 5,000 rupiah (58 cents) a day begging and pays 50,000 rupiah a month in rent for a small room. "Even with what we collect, we don't have enough to eat," she said.

Soldiers were also out on the streets to maintain security in the city which was the scene of massive student demonstrations and sporadic unrest for the greater part of 1998. At least a dozen students were killed in anti-government protests nationwide.

Instead of students, the soldiers were faced with rain and boredom Tuesday as they took what little shelter they could.

"We've been here since June and some of the soldiers have not been able to see their families for a long time," said

Lieutenant Muhammad Elyas.

Asked whether he missed his family, he said: "It is a bit difficult... but we are the military, we are strong and we are used to it. Duty is number one. We have no choice."

Muhammad, 25, comes from the province of East Kalimantan and last visited his family two years ago.

He said the soldiers did not view the protesting students as their enemy and were constantly reminded by their superiors to control their emotions when facing student taunts.

"We see the students as people, not as an enemy," he said.

"But yes, sometimes they are hard work." As for the students, who halted their protests last month to observe Ramadan, they have vowed to return to the streets after the holiday.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Zambian leader challenged to refute UNITA arms charge

LUSAKA (AFP) — Former Zambian leader Kenneth Kaunda has challenged the incumbent President Frederick Chiluba, to refute charges that he has helped to arm UNITA rebels in Angola, press reports said Tuesday. "There is no smoke without fire, let them deny it convincingly and effectively because Angola keeps coming back with the same accusations," the Independent Post newspaper quoted Kaunda as saying. Angola has twice accused Zambia of facilitating the shipment of arms to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Fresh allegations were made at the weekend during a meeting of foreign and defence ministers from several African states trying to map out a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kaunda said the fact that Zambia has been accused twice raised lots of questions which Chiluba had failed to address adequately. Zambia has on several occasions denied any involvement in the alleged shipment of arms to UNITA and has been cleared by the U.N. and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Cubans reported aiding embattled Angola government

LISBON (R) — Cuba has sent advisers to Angola, where it once had thousands of troops, to help the former Marxist government of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos in its fight against UNITA rebels, a Portuguese newspaper reported Tuesday. *Diário de Notícias* said that up to 200 advisers, including some senior military officials, were believed to be in Luanda. It gave no source for its report and did not say when the advisers had arrived. Some Cuban officials were also reported to be in the central highland town of Malanje, which has been under attack for weeks by UNITA troops, the newspaper said. Cuba backed dos Santos' Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) for some 15 years during the first Angolan civil war, which started before the country's independence from Portugal in 1975. A first peace treaty between the MPLA and UNITA, once backed by the United States and South Africa, broke down after rebel chief Jonas Savimbi refused to accept the results of 1992 elections in which dos Santos was elected president. Another United Nations-brokered truce was achieved in 1994, but that collapsed shortly before Christmas last year, plunging the oil and diamond-rich country back into civil war.

Indian minister promises safety for foreign tourists

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian Tourism Minister Madan Lal Khurana pledged Tuesday to act on growing complaints from foreign tourists that they are being harassed, cheated and even poisoned. "We have to stop this harassment of tourists as it brings a very bad name to the country," Khurana told reporters. The minister said tourism officials would be soon posted at the Indira Gandhi international airport in New Delhi to escort tourists to taxis, direct them to hotels and "extend all help they require." The move follows a spate of reports of airport touts luring unsuspecting tourists to shady hotels and then robbing them. A 20-year-old Japanese tourist who went missing near the airport last month was later found brutally murdered — his body cut into eight pieces. Unofficial guides have also reportedly cheated tourists in the Taj Mahal town of Agra, 200 kilometres south of here, by lacing their food with mild poison and then taking a cut of the doctor's treatment fee. Khurana said many small guest houses in the Indian capital had also become "terrorist hideouts and criminal havens." India granted 2.3 million tourist visas in 1997, compared to 5.2 million issued by tiny Singapore, and the number reportedly fell further last year.

France's giant Carnac site of standing stones partially reopened

PARIS (AFP) — Visitors are to be readmitted part of the year inside the giant Carnac site of 3,800 standing stones in western Brittany, which was fenced off to the public in 1991 to avoid damage to the ancient menhirs. The culture ministry has announced after a report on the state of the site that visitors will be authorised to roam about the site again but only during the winter months, outside the tourist season. Currently barriers have been thrown up around the 6,000-year-old menhirs to avoid further soil erosion and damage to vegetation that threatened to unsettle the standing stones. The damage was said to have been caused by 800,000 annual visitors trampling France's Stonehenge. After closing off close access to the menhirs, French authorities launched a bid to replant and revive the vegetation and had planned to build off-the-ground walkways while introducing a fee in 2001-2001 for access to Carnac. Local residents however have opposed the idea of what they describe as a "Menhirland," demanding continued free access to the standing stones. The ministry said that the walkways will be built along with observation sites, with access continuing to be free. Visits may be limited during the peak summer tourist season depending on the state of the soil. Archaeological diggings will be started to glean further knowledge on the dating of the stones and on the civilisation that erected them. France may also ask UNESCO to add the site to the World Heritage list.

21 killed in tornado in South Africa

MOUNT AYLIFF, South Africa (AFP) — At least 21 people were killed when a tornado hit the rural areas around the small town of Mount Ayliff in South Africa's Eastern Cape province, police told AFP Tuesday. "We have 21 people in the mortuary," station commander Nxibe Zweladzinga told AFP. He said about 225 people had been admitted to the Mount Ayliff hospital after the tornado hit on Monday afternoon. Other injured people had been transferred to hospitals in the neighbouring KwaZulu Natal province. The SAPA news agency reported that the injured included about 100 children who were critically hurt. Zweladzinga said all the dead had come from the areas surrounding the town, where traditional thatched rondavels (round houses) made of mud had collapsed in the torrential rain and wind. "The houses collapsed while people were inside and they were injured and some died," he said. Rescue workers were looking combing the area for more dead and injured. In December, a tornado ploughed through Umata, about 100 kilometres south of Mount Ayliff, killing 18 people and injuring 162.



Top British model Kate Moss, for French fashion house Chanel, designed by German designer Karl Lagerfeld presents this grey skirt and cardigan over a green, yellow and blue embroidered top as part of his Spring-Summer 1999 Haute Couture fashion collection (Reuters photo)



Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy speaks to journalists on his arrival at Pochentong International Airport, Phnom Penh. In a rare show of unity across Cambodia's political divide, Sam Rainsy backed proposals by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen for a wide reaching Khmer Rouge trial (AFP photo)

'China to free dissident journalist'

HONG KONG (R) — China might soon release a prominent Chinese dissident jailed in 1993 for her journalism, a Hong Kong rights group said Tuesday.

Gao Yu, who in early January left the Beijing prison where she had been kept, had been transferred to a young criminals' education camp near her home in the capital, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said.

"This paves the way for Gao's release," the centre said.

Gao, a 55-year-old journalist, was sentenced to six years in jail in 1993 for "disclosing state secrets" after writing a series of articles on structural reform in China for Hong Kong's *Mirror* Monthly magazine. The sentence ends this October.

The information centre said China's authorities had always seen the release of Gao, who has serious heart disease, as a possible political bargaining chip in the country's dealings with the West.

It added that the dissident was still being held because she insisted on pleading not guilty.

The information centre also said that veteran dissident Xu Wenli, who had previously been reported to have been sent to a harsh labour camp outside Beijing, had in fact been in the Beijing prison on Jan. 13.

Xu, 55, one of three founders of a banned opposition party, was jailed last month for 13 years. Two other founders of the Chinese Democratic Party, Wang Yimin and Qin Yongmin, were also sentenced to 11 years and 12 years in jail respectively.

In the northwestern province of Gansu, dissidents Yue Tianxiang and Guo Ningmin, who founded "China Workers Rights" to help laid-off workers and monitor corruption at state-owned factories, were being held on charges of "endangering state safety", the Hong Kong rights group said.

Yue, 42, and Guo, 40, were detained on Jan. 11. Police declined to disclose where the two were being held.

Dannii Minogue records her vote on Australian republic

SYDNEY (AFP) — Pin-up girl and pop star Dannii Minogue lives in Britain for most of the year but she thinks it's time Australia ditched the queen and became a republic.

"It's time we reaped the rewards of our unique identity" and becoming a republic is a step in the right direction, she told reporters Tuesday during a promotional stop in Sydney.

"I can't see why we

shouldn't. ... I have ties to England, my mum was born there and therefore I'm able to get a visa to live and work there as long as I want.

"But I think it's very frustrating for an Australian to grow up looking at the queen on every note and every coin and then to be told you can only come to live and work in the country for a year."

Australians experience exactly what

foreigners experienced when they applied for a visa to live in Britain.

"So why are we bowing down to the queen and living by her rules when you don't get anything extra for it anyway?" she said. "Yeah, let's be ourselves, let's be unique, let's stand up."

Minogue, the sister of pint-sized pop diva Kylie Minogue, was in Sydney to promote her new single, "Everlasting Night". In addition to

her music career, the younger Minogue has a thriving career as a pin-up — her calendar is among the best-selling in Australia.

"I can notice that and he more objective because I live outside of Australia and I'm travelling in and out," she said. "It's hard for people who live here to see that it is moving and changing. Stuff like that — music, fashion, clubs, everything is



The 'Marree Man', a four-kilometre-tall image of a naked Aboriginal man mysteriously carved into the outback is shown in this undated satellite image. The massive figure was secretly etched last year into red soil near remote Marree, 700 kilometres north of Adelaide and police have been unable to discover who was responsible. The self-proclaimed creators of the world's largest artwork want to shed their anonymity and are promising a series of clues about its origins to be unearthed in the coming weeks at famed giant chalk drawings in England. The first answer was buried in a sealed container near the Cerne Giant, in Dorset, England, and an anonymous statement faxed to media January 18 said, "It relates to the question Who?" (Reuters photo)

Europe welcomes Cambodia push for Khmer Rouge justice

PHNOM PENH (R) — The European Union Tuesday welcomed an assurance from Cambodian premier Hun Sen that he would back the prosecution of Khmer Rouge leaders held responsible for mass slaughter during their 1970s rule.

The EU said the assurances of member states Britain, France and Germany made a formal approach to Hun Sen last week to make clear its position that "all senior Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for crimes should be held to answer."

"Prime Minister Hun Sen... emphasised that there was no one who wanted a trial more than himself and that 'it is our unavoidable duty to bring the Khmer Rouge leaders to justice,'" the EU said in a statement.

"The EU encouraged the government to continue its efforts and its cooperation with the international community to achieve accountability for the crimes of the 1975 to 1979 period and to develop a mechanism for holding Khmer Rouge leaders responsible," the EU said.

The surrender of two top Khmer Rouge lieutenants last month has thrown a spotlight on the sensitive question of whether leaders of the group responsible for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people during its 1975-1979 rule should be brought to justice.

Hun Sen, a one-time junior Khmer Rouge officer who broke away in 1977, initially gave Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea a VIP welcome back to society and hinted their trial might not be in the interests of national reconciliation.

But after a chorus of indignation from human rights groups and pressure from some Western governments, he said he had always backed a trial for leaders of the notorious communist group.

Hun Sen and his then senior co-premier, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, asked the United Nations in June 1997 for help in setting up a tribunal for Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for the killings when they held power.

As a result, a team of U.N.-appointed jurists visited Cambodia in November to assess evidence and consider how legal proceedings might be undertaken. The team is due to present its proposals to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan next month.

A senior aide to Hun Sen said at the weekend that the premier is surveying public opinion on the issue of a trial for Khmer Rouge leaders but will leave the final decision to legal experts.

On Yenteng said that there were differing opinions about what period any tribunal should cover with some suggesting all crimes against humanity committed between 1970 and 1998 be investigated.

That could implicate the United States, China, Thailand and possibly others as well.

The United States launched a massive bombing campaign against Cambodia during the Vietnam war. Analysts argue the U.S. bombing fuelled the rise of the Khmer Rouge.

The Khmer Rouge were forced from power by a Vietnamese invasion in late 1978 and took refuge on the Thai border where Vietnam's then-enemies, Thailand and China, provided sanctuary and supplies for the Khmer Rouge war against Vietnam's army of occupation and the Hanu-backed government.

Through the 1980s the Khmer Rouge dominated an opposition "coalition government" recognised by the United Nations and supported by non-communist Southeast Asia.

Political analysts said if Hun Sen insisted on broadening the time-frame for a tribunal investigation, the whole process could founder due to foreign objections.

"The danger is it would just make it more difficult to arrange a tribunal," said a Western diplomat.

"If his objective is to bring the truth into the open he should go for a strictly time-limited process, in the course of which, all this (foreign involvement) would come out anyway."

China opposes inclusion of Taiwan in U.S.-Japan defence pact

BEIJING (AFP) — China said Tuesday it opposed the incorporation of Taiwan into a Japan-U.S. defence pact whether directly or indirectly because it constituted an infringement of Chinese sovereignty.

Foreign ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi told a bi-weekly news briefing the Taiwan issue was entirely an internal affair of China and "no one has the right to interfere in this issue."

China has taken offence to remarks made by Ichiro Ozawa, the leader of Japan's Liberal Party (LDP) which last week forged a coalition with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Ozawa said last week Japan-U.S. defence cooperation guidelines, following emergencies in areas "surrounding Japan" should include Russia, China, Taiwan and the Korean peninsula.

The LDP has refused to specify geographical areas for the military cooperation sticking to the "areas surrounding Japan" phrase apparently in fear of angering China, which sees Taiwan as a renegade province.

The guidelines allow greater Japanese support for U.S. forces during crises. Enacting legislation for the U.S.-Japan guidelines is scheduled to be passed in a parliamentary session high opened in Tokyo Tuesday.

Ozawa is generally in favour of a stronger overseas defence role for Japan.

Sun said Japan-U.S. security cooperation was bilateral cooperation against the special backdrop of the cold war era.

"This arrangement should be strictly limited to its bilateral scope. If after the cold war ended this arrangement went beyond its bilateral scope, it will certainly trigger worries of neighbouring countries," he said.

The direct or indirect incorporation of Taiwan in the Japan-U.S. Defence Cooperation Guideline constitutes an infringement on China's sovereignty and will be firmly opposed by the Chinese government and people," he said.

Sun said the Japanese government had clarified Ozawa's remarks through diplomatic channels.

The official China Daily in an editorial Tuesday said the "unilateral inclusion of a territory of another country with independent sovereignty under any form of Japanese influence constitutes an extreme violation of international law."

The editorial said "despite every Japanese effort to conceal their true motivation, slips of tongue, as they are usually referred to, by Japanese politicians reveal just what is in their minds."

It said the Japanese government's clarification aimed at assuring China "the areas surrounding Japan" was not a specific geographical concept but based on regional developments was too weak to stand scrutiny.

"Compared to previous awkwardly phrased deceptive words, Ozawa spilled the beans over Japan's intentions in the region," it said.

North Korea deputy foreign minister Kim Kye-Gwan, Pyongyang's chief negotiator, welcomed the delegates to the Geneva conference centre shortly after 10:00 a.m. (0900 GMT).

Communist North Korea, chairing the negotiations for the first time, a fact which observers say could prompt Pyongyang into making uncharacteristic concessions.

The 1950-53 Korean war ended with a truce, but a permanent peace treaty was never signed, leaving the North and South technically still at war.

The talks come amid mounting tension in the region over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile capabilities.

Yeltsin feeling better, but doctors plan more tests

MOSCOW (AP) — A hospitalised Boris Yeltsin was feeling better Tuesday, but doctors wanted to conduct more tests to determine whether he will need surgery to repair his bleeding ulcer.

Sergei Mironov, the president's chief doctor, said Yeltsin wasn't expected to leave the hospital for two to three weeks, and won't be allowed to travel for up to three months, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

Yeltsin, who was hospitalised Sunday, had planned to travel to France on Jan. 28, his first trip abroad since he cut short a visit to Central Asia in October, also because of illness.

Yeltsin's press service said the trip to France had not been cancelled yet. Yeltsin and French President Jacques Chirac spoke by phone Tuesday, the Kremlin said, but no details were immediately available.

Tuesday morning, doctors met to discuss Yeltsin's condition and give him medication and injections to prevent the ulcer from spreading, the Interfax news agency said.

"The president has become more active, he is looking through documents supplied by the administration and also his reading newspapers," presidential spokesman Dmitri Yakushkin told Interfax.

The president was to undergo tests Wednesday and doctors will determine whether he needs surgery. Mironov said. Ulcers can usually be treated with medicine, though surgery is required in some cases.

Yeltsin's doctors had indicated Monday that the president would just receive medicine, but later they said a final decision on surgery would be made Wednesday, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

Yeltsin's latest trip to the hospital is his fifth since he won reelection in 1996. He has not set foot in his Kremlin office this year.

Opposition politicians are again calling for

Yeltsin's ouster, saying he is incapable of running the government. He turned over most responsibility for running the country to Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov months ago.

Mironov and other doctors played down the seriousness of Yeltsin's latest illness.

"I do not believe that it is a very complicated case," said Michael DeBakey, the American heart surgeon who observed Yeltsin's 1996 bypass surgery, according to ITAR-TASS.

Despite continued pressure from Russia's Communist-dominated lower house of parliament, Mironov said the public was unlikely to get a detailed report on Yeltsin's health. Lawmakers tried to pass a resolution requiring a health report this fall, but the motion failed.

The issue "cannot be considered a purely medical one," Mironov said, according to ITAR-TASS.

"The president is a human being who has the right to seek the protection of his privacy rights."

The talks process began in December 1997, but the first two meetings broke up in acrimony after Pyongyang demanded the 37,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea be withdrawn.

Analysts say North Korea's first spell in the chair means Pyongyang is unlikely to allow this round of talks to collapse or end without at least nominal progress.

Diplomatic sources said North Korea had chaired Monday's preparatory talks in a "constructive" way.

'Eid Al Fitr joyless for prisoners' children

By Nidal Al Mughrabi
Reuters

PALESTINIAN SCHOOLGIRL Nihad Zaqout moved U.S. President Bill Clinton to tears last month when she told him of the plight of her father in an Israeli jail.

But 11-year-old Zaqout says she lost hope after the president failed to win her father's freedom in time for this week's festival of 'Eid Al Fitr.

Zaqout said she lay awake at night waiting for her father to knock at the door of their home in the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. He never came.

"The American president has broken his promise to secure the release of my father before 'Eid Al Fitr," she told Reuters on Sunday, the eve of the festival marking the end of the

fasting month of Ramadan.

During a ground-breaking visit to the Gaza Strip on December 14, Clinton told Zaqout and three other Palestinian schoolgirls that he would take up their case with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Witnesses said the four weeping girls brought tears to the eyes of the U.S. leader.

Zaqout said her father Mohammed is serving a life sentence for stabbing and wounding Israelis in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv in 1988. Israel refuses to free Muslim militants or any prisoners it says have blood on their hands.

"I will tell my father to put no hope in anyone but God, no Clinton and nobody else will help us to free our relatives," Zaqout said when asked what she was going to tell her

father during a prison visit next week.

Netanyahu freed 250 prisoners in November — the first of 750 prisoners due to be released in three batches under a Clinton-mediated peace deal Netanyahu signed with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at the White House in October.

Israel's inclusion of 150 common criminals upset Palestinians, who had expected all 250 to be prisoners held for nationalist offences.

While marking 'Eid Al Fitr in Gaza on Monday, Arafat said: "As for my brothers the prisoners, I tell them, 'Patience, and God willing, soon we will be together and pray together in Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem'." Israelis were just as disappointed in Clinton as Zaqout was — but for another reason.

Israeli officials voiced shock when Clinton, on his December visit, said he was moved to tears both by children of the prisoners and of Israelis killed by Palestinians. Israelis said Clinton wrongly equated the murderers with the murdered.

Other Gaza children of Palestinians in Israeli and Palestinian jails had little joy at the start of 'Eid Al Fitr.

"My mother bought new clothes for me but I will not be happy with them because I need my father back in the house," said Zaqout's 10-year-old brother Jihad.

Fatima Al-Khawaja, 70, whose son Yasser, an Islamic Jihad activist, is serving a life sentence in an Israeli jail for stabbing and wounding five soldiers in Gaza City in 1987, said she once hoped he would be freed as

a result of peace deals with Israel.

"We lost faith in Arabs and in Jews to obtain the release of our sons," she said. "Our 'Eid is delayed until Yasser is released." The release of prisoners from Israel's jails is important to Arafat in his effort to garner the support of the Palestinians for peace deals with Israel. Palestinian officials say about 2,400 prisoners are still held by Israel.

Sufim Abu Zayda, a negotiator on the issue of prisoners, predicted an explosion in Palestinian areas if the prisoner issue is not solved fairly and soon.

"You cannot imagine how had jailed fathers feel for not being with their families at this day," said Abu Zayda, who served 12 years in Israeli jails between 1981 and 1993. Prospects for advancement on the

peace front have dimmed as Israel enters a four-month election campaign.

Last Wednesday Palestinian lawmakers gave the Palestinian Authority two weeks to free 450 political prisoners, mostly from the Islamic militant group Hamas, or face the threat of a no-confidence vote.

"It is silly to ask Israel to release our prisoners if those released will be re-arrested by our own government," said a relative of a detainee in a Palestinian Authority jail, who asked not to be identified.

At the weekend, Palestinian police released 54 jailed prisoners for the festival, including members of Hamas and other opposition groups. Israel denounced the move as another violation of agreements.

Roadside slaughter provokes anger at gilded youth

By Suzanne Goldenberg

IN A CITY where wealth and the right connections will fix most anything, the three young men in the black BMW would not have been unduly concerned about driving drunk and at high speed through the New Delhi night.

Then the driver, Sanjeev Nanda, grandson of a former Indian naval chief and son of a businessman, lost control, plunging into roadside cluster of men. Five people, including three policemen, were killed. A sixth died at the weekend, and a seventh man is critically ill in hospital.

But it is the trio's supreme callousness after the tragedy that has horrified the capital, and set off a raging debate about the moral decline of India's gilded youth and the ugly face of an elite that believes it is above the law.

According to the police and the only one of the several people who saw the accident to come forward — a full six days after the event, such is people's reluctance to get involved in any police matter — the men got out of the car to check for damage to the bonnet and windscreen, and then sped off, crushing a victim who was pinned under the car.

"The injured, screaming for help, lay on the road," a Bombay businessman, Sunil Kumar Kulkarni, told reporters. "One of the victims, who was dragged for some 100 metres alongside the front wheel of the car, could have been saved had the driver not reversed." The young men drove round the corner to the posh Golf Links home of one of the passengers and woke his father, Rajiv Gupta.

Then, the police say, the men drove the BMW into the garage and cleaned off the human remains. But police arrived within an hour, following a trail of leaked oil.

More than its horror at the victims' fate, Delhi has been shocked by the pedigree of the three in the car: all the product of the capital's most prestigious public school. The police have started proceedings against them for culpable homicide and destroying evidence. The father, Gupta, has also been accused of destroying evidence.

A tycoon warning for the world from Hong Kong

By Stephen Vines

IF ONLY governments were run by successful businessmen, wouldn't that make them work far better? It's an interesting idea but one which could be quickly dispelled by a trip to Hong Kong which nowadays is run by a former shipping tycoon.

Those wishing to make the trip seated in the first-class compartment of an airline had better wait until the end of the week because from today many of the seats will be taken up by a gaggle of tycoons travelling at the Hong Kong taxpayer's expense to the first meeting of the chief executive's council of advisers (note that business-minded Hong Kong calls its head of government the chief executive).

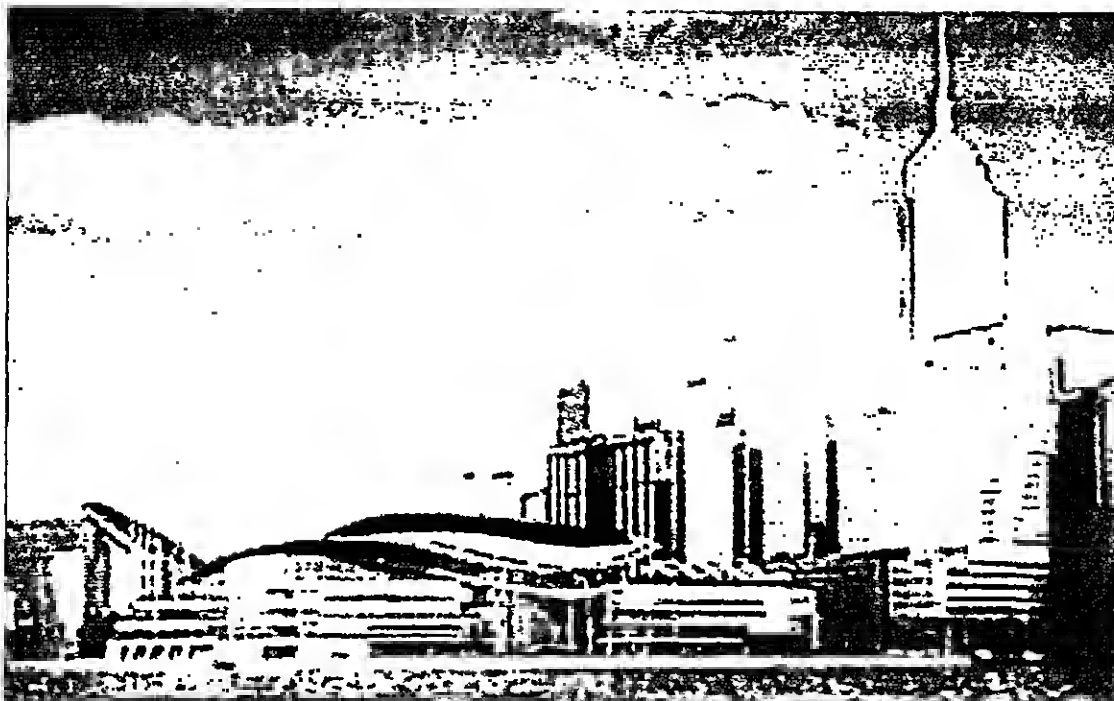
Jetting in for the meeting are such luminaries as the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, Karl-Hermann Baumann, the chairman of the German conglomerate Siemens, Cor Boonstra, the head of Royal Philips Electronics in the Netherlands, Maurice Greenberg, the boss of the insurance giant the American International Group, and Shoichiro Toyoda, the veteran chairman of Japan's Toyota Motor Corp.

Yes, there is no doubt that the chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, who was formerly the head of the Orient Overseas shipping line, has gathered some of the biggest names in the global business community to advise him.

They are arriving a week after Tung completed a round of meetings with groups of legislators. Without exception all those elected by a process of universal suffrage, a minority in Hong Kong's exquisitely rigged system, emerged from their meetings saying that Tung had no intention of listening to them.

They have a point: the chief executive is impatient with local politicians who do little more than put up "political shows." He feels far more comfortable with the men (there are few women involved) of business. Yet the tycoons who have traditionally been such an enormous influence in the running of Hong Kong are restless. They may have Tung's ear but they are deeply affronted by the temerity of elected politicians who criticise them for being mean during times of economic recession and for having too much influence over the government.

One of their number, a high-profile property developer called Ronnie Chan, moaned: "People



Hong Kong: A haven for the business tycoon (file photo)

used to say, before the handover: 'The communists are coming.' But the local community are the communists." That was big news to most of the people who live here, the majority of whom are refugees from Communist China.

However, Chan's definition does not quite coincide with that of Karl Marx. He defines Communism as allowing the hoi polloi to have a say in government and to press it to implement policies that are not supported by the business community. The publicly stated opinions of the local tycoons are terrifying enough; in private they are even more Neanderthal in their views.

Having been drawn from this group Tung shares their prejudices and is intent on running a government free of "political meddling." The crowning irony of this authoritarian, some say arrogant, style of government is that in laissez-faire Hong Kong it has led to a far higher degree of state intervention than would even have been contemplated in Britain during the brief moments it was ruled by Labour

governments which lacked the appellation "new" before their name.

In the wake of the Asian financial crisis Tung's administration has plunged into the stock market and snapped up more blue chip shares than any other single holder of equity. In effect some 10 per cent of the market has been nationalised. As a result the stock market is far less liquid and far less attractive to overseas investors.

Before plunging into a share-buying frenzy, the government ordered a freeze on all land sales to prevent the property market from sliding into free fall — or, to put it another way, to help the big property developers from having to face drastic cuts in the vast profit margins they have traditionally enjoyed.

Whatever the motive for the government's action, it has succeeded in limiting the operation of the free market in two of the most crucial areas of Hong Kong's economy. The government says it acted to defend the local currency and to thwart

speculators, previously known as investors when they were pouring money into the former colony.

The government acted as it did because it is led by people who think that they alone can fix problems. They do not trust the market to find equilibrium. And they certainly do not trust those elected by the people to have a say in how problems can be solved.

Tung behaves much as he did when he was running his shipping empire and trying to rescue it from collapse in the 1980s. Like most Chinese companies, Orient Overseas is not famous for its democratic style of management. Decisions were taken at the top and handed down to the minions. When trouble hit the company Tung mobilised his friends in the big banks around the globe. He thinks governments can be run in the same way, which is why he is such an interventionist.

The situation is exacerbated by Tung's inability to realise that the people he governs expect to see him when a crisis emerges, and expect him to explain what he is doing.

In the less than two years since Tung took control, Hong Kong has been hit by a series of crises, including a mysterious and deadly bird flu, poisoning of the seas and the worst recession in three decades. Tung has led firmly from behind.

The people whom he is leading have no recourse to the ballot box to express their discontent. Instead sullen resentment is building and taking Hong Kong into uncharted waters as the recession deepens.

As Tung's popularity ratings have steadily declined he has done what most failing governments do these days. A highly paid spin doctor has been appointed who will start work shortly. Tung, meanwhile, has been prised out of his office and started getting out and about. He still gives the impression that he has better things to do. Fortunately, he is a naturally friendly man who is actually quite good out on the streets but doesn't understand why he needs to be there.

What Tung's administration has proved is the unlikely truth that governments are actually better run by politicians, particularly those subject to elections that give them a constituency somewhat wider than a small band of tycoons who are not the ideal guardians of the public interest.

— The Independent

Poetry to inspire LA

By Karen Lowe
Agence France Presse

IN A CITY awash with moving, neon billboards splashed with come-hither panted lips and thrusting hips, this was an eye opener: dozens of white on black billboards with poetry, selling nothing.

They are from Poets Anonymous who wanted to give a gift to Los Angeles in the form of 60 billboards with excerpts of famous poets that would — they hoped — enrich the lives of pedestrians and motorists.

It was a hit and miss proposition. It brought tears to the eyes of some residents who said they were moved by the words, and shrugs of incomprehension from others — especially Hollywood high school students.

Across the street from the school were two signs at opposite ends of two blocks on Highland Street.

One, perched above a pizza parlour read, "I will leave the door open until something human comes," by Lucille Clifton.

Down the street was another next to a laundromat and across the street from Paramount car wash that read, "What matters most is how well you walk through the fire," from Charles Bukowski.

Walter Sanchez, 18, looked back and forth at both billboards, waiting a few seconds for something to light up inside. "Nothing," he lamented. "I got nothing."

Jackie Barayo, 17, initially was hostile. "What is that supposed to mean?" she asked testily. After a few moments' contemplation, she offered that maybe Clifton was keeping her options open, waiting for a good man.

A spokeswoman for the publicity company hired by Poets Anonymous said the poetry billboards were intended to be an antidote to the commercial spectacle that bombards those travelling around the city.

The billboards also include quotes from E.E. Cummings, Emily Dickinson, Helene Johnson, Wallace Stevens, Mark Strand and T.S. Eliot, whose poetry excerpt was particularly resonant here:

"Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon,
Debbie Useldinger, 44, the owner of "Ruby Begonia" florist shop, said she first noticed the signs when walking to work a couple of weeks ago, and looks to them for comfort whenever she leaves, particularly the Bukowski.

"When you own a small business you go through a lot of adversity. It's a reminder that if you can handle the adversity, you'll do okay in life," she said. "It makes the traffic seem not so bad. It's calming."

Corinne Weber, 37, who describes herself as a full-time mother and full-time student, said the first time she saw one of the poetry billboards she did a mental double take.

'Do I dare Disturb the Universe'

"Like an eyelid held open hideously
I am watching" — Pablo Neruda
"What is this? I didn't know it was some kind of stunt. At first I thought it was some kind of anti-smoking campaign, or something. Now, I understand. This is so refreshing. Finally, something intelligent," she said of the quote from the Chilean poet.

She said looks forward to seeing the words of poets as she gets on the freeway or while waiting for her car to be washed at Paramount, using the poetry snippets as small mental explosives that get her thinking.

Back at the Sicilian pizza parlor under the Bukowski quote, there was puzzlement among the owners.

"What billboard?" asked co-owner Joe Yermolan. When told what the billboard above his shop said, and asked what it meant to him, he said, "Oh, you'll have ask my brother, Rick."

Rick Yermolan, too, was stumped and said his friend Khosro Imampour, 45, sitting in a booth was the philosopher and could interpret Bukowski's poetry.

Imampour rubbed his head, and then offered, "You must go back to biology. To water. We come from water. Humans come from water."

Leaving Hollywood for the 101, one of the many freeways that circles this metropolis, is a message from T.S. Eliot.

"Do I dare
Disturb the Universe?"

Under the billboard was heavy machinery and a block-sized hole in the ground where a new building was going up in front of a Holiday Inn.

— The Guardian

Ethiopians, Eritreans lack war fervour

By Simon Denyer
Reuters

THEIR ARMIES are preparing for battle and their governments' propaganda machines are working at full throttle, but the ordinary people of Ethiopia and Eritrea do not relish the prospect of war.

"Ethiopians know what war is like," said one businessman in the north-western Ethiopian town of Bahir Dar. "This is a problem between the two governments and they should resolve it." A border dispute between the Horn of Africa neighbours exploded into war last year with hundreds of people killed in six weeks of artillery exchanges and aerial bombardments.

While the fighting died down quickly, Ethiopia and Eritrea have reinforced their positions along the 1,000 km border and have since engaged in a virtual war of words.

Diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute are stalled, and local people say fighting could reignite at any moment.

Both governments maintain they are committed to peace. Yet every day, the state-controlled media in both countries dish up a bitter diet of virulent about the "enemy."

A commentary entitled "Perpetrators of Evil" in the weekly Eritrea Profile last month described Ethiopia's rulers as "more evil than Satan" for their deportation of thousands of Eritrean civilians from Ethiopia.

In Addis Ababa, the press is no less scathing — even borrowing some of the vocabulary of the hated former regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam, which the current leaders of both countries fought long rebellions to topple.

The Ethiopian Herald last week dusted off a 10-year-old article denigrating Eritrea's ruling front — written in the Mengistu era. In it and other articles, Eritreans are referred to, disparagingly, as "Africa's Israelis."

In other papers, lung pieces purporting to be readers' views, accuse Eritrea of killing Ethiopian civilians "in the trau-

dition of fascists and Nazis."

But the press seems a poor guide to public opinion. With both countries accused by press watchdogs Repoters Sans Frontiers of regularly violating freedom of speech, the lack of free debate is all too apparent.

"They do not consult the people," said the Bahir Dar businessman. "That is the problem." The governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea came to power in 1991, after working together — despite periodic mistrust — to oust Mengistu after a long and intensely costly civil war. Two years later Eritrea took independence from Ethiopia after a referendum.

The former allies are now enemies.

'Every family in Eritrea has lost someone in the struggle... we hope the leaders and politicians remember'

A long-running border disagreement, centering on a rocky 400 square km patch of land called the Badme triangle, suddenly seemed to assume a greater importance.

Behind-the-scenes diplomacy failed to resolve the dispute about who owned the land, which was administered by Ethiopia.

After a border skirmish on May 6, Eritrea invaded the contested territory on May 12.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) has tried to broker a peace deal but Eritrea has rejected the OAU's demand that it withdraw to positions it held before the fighting started.

The Asmara government has instead called for international monitors to police the disputed border while ownership is established and for direct talks with the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

But Ethiopia rejects that proposal, saying it will not open talks until Eritrea pulls back its forces.

Nationalist feeling is strong, and neither side wants to give in, but the people are also very weary of war.

"We have waited so long, the OAU has spoken, Eritrea has rejected its call. We have no alternative but to fight the war that has been imposed upon us," said one angry, young Eritrean on the streets of Addis Ababa.

Eyon, a young, educated Asmaran on the other side of the lines said: "We may be married, or related, but our land is the most important issue. Too much blood was lost for this land, it is sacred." But Meles, an office worker in Asmara, said people were fed up with the war. "They want it to end soon, one way or another," Dawit, a soldier on leave in Asmara, said the cost of the war was widely known. "Every family in Eritrea has lost someone in the struggle (for independence) and now everyone has a relative or friend who is mobilised."

"We know it — we hope the leaders and politicians remember it."

But the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea see themselves as brothers, who often worked and lived together, and even belonged to the same families.

Those ties were cruelly broken by the war as thousands were forced to give up businesses and sometimes families in their host countries to return to their country of birth.

Relations had soured after Eritrea introduced its own currency, the nakfa, in November 1997, to replace the Ethiopian birr.

As economic rivalry intensified, Ethiopia responded by demanding cross-border trade be conducted in hard currency — hitting Eritrea in the pocket-

IMF owns up to Asia mistakes

WASHINGTON (R) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) admitted Tuesday it made mistakes in handling Asia's financial crisis, putting an overoptimistic spin on the likely economic downturn and misjudging the market's response.

But an internal document published Tuesday defended the basic thrust of IMF policy recommendations to the one-time tiger economies of Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea.

The IMF said high interest rates, criticised by many for dragging Asia into a still deeper recession, were needed to prevent currencies spinning even further down, and initial demands for balanced budgets did not accelerate the slump.

But the fact that growth estimates were wrong meant the fund had probably recommended more spending cuts than would have otherwise been necessary.

"Monetary policy, albeit only after some period, achieved its basic objective of avoiding a depreciation/inflation spiral in both Korea and Thailand," the IMF said in the report, its first major assessment of the international bailouts of 1997.

"This is not to deny, of course, that monetary tight-

ening had a cost for the real economy, but the alternative would have been more costly," the 147-page document added.

The IMF put together rescue deals worth some \$120 billion for the three Asian economies in the second half of 1997, urging the three to let their currencies float and carry out deep economic reforms.

Officials have said the release of the internal document was a step toward transparency — a long-standing recommendation from the IMF to its member states but one it has itself been reluctant to implement in full.

The report said the Asia programmes, large as they were, were still too small to protect countries once market confidence evaporated. But bigger programmes would have increased the risk of moral hazard — the idea that countries or investors act irresponsibly because they know someone will bail them out.

All three Asian countries have plunged into recession since the rescue deals were put together, although fund officials and others say that the worst is now over.

Asian markets have responded relatively calmly to this month's economic turmoil in Brazil, which received the first payment

from its own international rescue deal last month.

But the IMF review admitted that fund forecasts of Asia's economic prospects had been deeply flawed, and that these overoptimistic projections had in turn influenced policy recommendations on tighter fiscal policies.

"The IMF, like most observers, misread the extent of the recession," the document said.

"The fund and the authorities appear to have erred on the side of optimism, in part because of concerns that realistically pessimistic forecasts would have exacerbated the situation further. But the resulting large revisions in projections were detrimental to credibility," the document added.

The IMF revised its growth forecasts down steadily over the course of 1997 and 1998, finally admitting that all three countries faced deep recession — and IMF projections were often more optimistic than those from outside observers.

Noting that the forecasts could have drawn on experience from countries such as Mexico, where a currency collapse was followed by tumbling output, it added: "The impression remains that both the fund

and outsiders erred in some ways that could have been avoided at the time."

The IMF also said problems in Asian countries meant it had been appropriate to include structural reforms in programmes agreed with the authorities. But it admitted mistakes were made here as well, particularly when it recommended Indonesia bank closures without giving investors adequate guarantees.

"The policy regarding guarantees now appears to have been ill-advised," it said, noting that the guarantee systems were different in Thailand and South Korea.

The IMF admitted it had probably been overly optimistic in its assumptions that the rescue deals would be able to restore market confidence. Delays in implementing the IMF programmes, large volumes of private sector debt and mounting concern about structural weaknesses had all unsettled investors.

The IMF said more effort should be made in future crises to "bail in" the private sector, ensuring that private investors also bore a share of the costs of rescue deals, although it was not clear exactly how this should be done.

Army to cut staff

Israeli report warns of vulnerable shekel

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli treasury's chief economist warned Tuesday that despite high interest rates the Israeli shekel remained exposed to another sharp depreciation.

"The only thing that is unclear is when the big depreciation will come and what will spark it," Tzipi Galyam, who also heads the state revenues administration, said in a report.

The danger, Galyam warned, was that when Israeli interest rates come down, savers would move to sell shekels and buy foreign currency, pressuring the shekel exchange rate.

High interest rates had also encouraged a resumption of foreign currency borrowing, she said.

The Bank of Israel hiked

its base lending rate by 4.0 percentage points last November to 13.5 per cent in a bid to stem a sharp depreciation of the shekel that began in October.

The shekel has since strengthened against the dollar to about 4.06 on Tuesday from a low of 4.36 in October. But interest rates remain high, both relative to domestic inflation and overseas rates.

Most economists do not expect the central bank to make any significant cut in rates in the first half of the year, despite falling inflation, because of political uncertainty in the run-up to elections on May 17.

"The appreciation of the local currency, high interest rates and a return to low inflation, as we have seen in recent weeks, gives rise to a feeling of déjà vu of the situation we

had in September," Galyam said in the report.

Galyam said the Israeli economy faced uncertainty because of parliament's failure to approve the government's 1999 draft budget, and because of continued nervousness in world financial markets and weak demand among many of Israel's trade partners.

The report said estimates for Israeli economic growth this year, currently at 2.0-2.5 per cent, may have to be revised downward because of the Brazilian financial crisis.

The report also cited political nervousness in the absence of progress on Israeli-Palestinian peace and the threat from Iraq.

"It is certainly possible that political uncertainty was among the factors that led to a decline in foreign

investment in Israel," the report said.

The Bank of Israel said Monday that foreign investment fell some 40 per cent last year.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army is looking to manpower cuts to make savings in the current year, chief of staff Shaul Mofaz announced Tuesday.

He told the parliamentary foreign and defence affairs committee the army would get rid of 250 career posts, 900 civilian employees and a thousand or so soldiers involved in non-combatant duties.

At least another 2,000 senior officers will go, including eight generals and 20 colonels who reach retirement age in the next few months.

However, General Mofaz said combat units would be reinforced.

Minister says Japan in 'economic crisis'

TOKYO (R) — A top Japanese minister said Tuesday the country was facing a national economic crisis and a major government report said there were no steady signs yet that the world's second-largest economy was on the way back to health.

"The nation's economy is in what might be called a national economic crisis as it faces its worst post-war recession," Economic Planning Agency (EPA) Minister Taichi Sakaiya told an opening session of parliament Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa said in his speech to the legislature that with capital markets slumping, banks burdened with bad loans and concerns about employment rising, the domestic economy "is in an extremely severe slump."

And the government itself, in a monthly report, acknowledged that at best, good signs were merely starting to emerge amid bad ones, whereas all signs used to be bad.

"Bright movements are

sporadically coming out, but such movements have not become a major stream," said Takashi Omori, domestic economic affairs director at the EPA's Research Bureau.

The EPA, which released the report earlier Tuesday, basically stuck to an overall assessment made last month, using the same phrase, "embryonic movements," to describe signs of change within an economy still in a severe state.

Omori said consumer spending had stopped falling in areas such as electronics products with reasonable price tags, but added: "It is not in a situation in which the embryonic movements have been spreading."

Amid the bleak tone of his cabinet ministers, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi put on a brave face in his keynote speech, pledging to bring the economy back to positive growth next fiscal year.

"With a combination of various policies (adopted

by the government) and efforts by the private sector, I am confident that the economy will recover to around 0.5 per cent growth in fiscal 1999," Obuchi said.

He said he would make utmost efforts to revitalise the economy by making 1999 "the first year of economic revival."

The EPA report also said that while a fall in the number of corporate bankruptcies in October and November from a year ago was a positive sign for the economy, corporate capital spending, from small firms to large manufacturers, had fallen.

A more hopeful note was struck in a report by Shoko Research, a leading credit research firm, which said debt from corporate bankruptcies in December fell 62.3 per cent from a year earlier to 1.02 trillion yen (\$8.9 billion), while the number of bankruptcies fell 30.8 per cent to 1,123 cases.

But an industry group said preliminary machine tool orders had fallen in December.

The Japan Machine Tool Builders' Association said December orders received by machine tool manufacturers totalled 69.2 billion yen, down 29.7 per cent year-on-year.

Domestic demand for the month fell 42.1 per cent year-on-year to 31.5 billion yen while foreign demand declined 14.4 per cent to 37.7 billion yen, it said.

The EPA's report also said job conditions had deteriorated, with Japan's unemployment rate reaching a record high 4.4 per cent in November, adding that a strong sense of uncertainty over the economic outlook remained, partly due to a recent rise in long-term interest rates.

EPA Minister Sakaiya tried to remain upbeat, saying the economy was showing more signs of improvement than it had in the previous month. But clarifying a remark he made on Monday about the economy hitting bottom and starting to pick up by March, he stressed he had not said the economy had already bottomed out.

U.S. industries boost output

WASHINGTON (R) — Despite falling exports, U.S. industries churned out more goods during December and managed their most vigorous quarterly gain of the year during the final three months last year, the Federal Reserve has said.

Analysts said the end-of-year acceleration demonstrated the resilience of a nearly eight-year-old U.S. expansion but also noted that turmoil in Asia and Latin America were taking a toll in lost manufacturing jobs and weaker foreign sales.

Production by the nation's mines, factories and utilities increased 0.2 per cent last month after an upwardly revised dip of 0.1 per cent in November and a 0.5 per cent gain in October.

But for the full year 1998, industrial production grew only 3.7 per cent after a 6.0 per cent jump in 1997. It was the smallest rise in annual output since a 3.5 per cent rise in 1993.

Businesses ran at 80.9 per cent of their maximum capacity last month, down from 81.0 per cent in November and the weakest

since 80.6 per cent in August 1993.

A global slump in emerging markets in Asia and Latin America has sapped demand for many U.S.-made goods already, though robust domestic demand stemming from big stock market gains and strong job growth has cushioned the blow.

For example, production rates for new cars rose strongly in last year's final quarter to make up for a strike at General Motors Corp. earlier while computer output soared all year.

During the fourth quarter last year, computer production shot up at a 50.4 per cent annual rate while auto and truck output jumped at a 79.3 per cent rate.

"The problem is we're developing an unbalanced economy, one in which the manufacturing sector is dragging relative to non-manufacturing," said Robert Dederick, economic consultant to Northern Trust Co. in Chicago.

"But secondly within manufacturing, unless you're making computers, you're struggling," he added. Dederick said the worst might be over for U.S. manufacturers but cautioned the outlook was clouded by woes in other countries.

Federal Reserve Governor Roger Ferguson similarly noted that events like Brazil's currency devaluation show that global prospects remained laced with risk.

"The downturn in some of the troubled economies of Asia seem to be bottoming out, at least outside of Japan, but the risk of spreading distress in Latin America creates another element of international uncertainty," Ferguson said in a speech.

The Fed said utility companies that had suffered weak demand for electricity and natural gas because of exceptionally mild weather during October and November boosted their output 1.6 per cent in December.

Manufacturing companies increased production 0.2 per cent last month after a 0.1 per cent pickup in November.

Jerry Jasinoski, president of the National Association of Manufacturers, said man-

ufacturing output that makes up 85 per cent of total industrial production was not in decline.

"While it is clear that the manufacturing sector increased at a slower rate than the overall economy last year, the main reasons were lower exports and the process of reducing excess inventories," he said.

The Commerce Department said that business inventories in November increased 0.4 per cent to a seasonally adjusted \$1.088 trillion following a 0.2 per cent advance in October. Sales also rose 0.4 per cent after a 0.3 per cent October gain, implying a healthy balance in stocks of unsold goods.

The picture remained mixed for manufacturing in 1999 after a difficult year in 1998.

"There have been 252,000 manufacturing jobs lost since March and what this output for the whole year reflects is the damage from South East Asia," said economist David Orr of First Union Corp. in Charlotte, N.C.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- 1 Found to a pulp
- 5 Threshers' waste
- 10 Islamic republic
- 14 Away from the wind
- 15 Equestrian
- 16 Stout's Wolfe
- 17 Himalayan snowman
- 18 Really miffed
- 19 Windmill element
- 20 Dickens classic
- 23 Track circuit
- 24 Hoodwinked
- 25 sals
- 26 Plead
- 31 Harvests
- 35 Ghostly visitor
- 36 In 20A
- 38 Tennis do-over
- 39 Dutch cheese
- 40 Hunter in the sky
- 41 Sorority letter
- 42 TV screen
- 43 Ill-used clerk in 20A

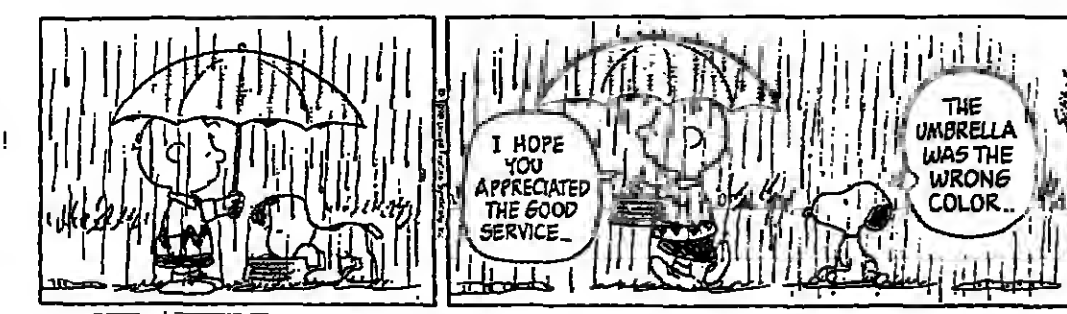
By Matthew Higgins
Concord, NH
12/25/98

THURSDAY'S PUZZLE SOLVED

HEAP SLAP ICEUP
ELLA KALE CADRE
WILDRIVER ORGAIN
RELAX KNEELS
APPEAL LEFT
USE RESHAPE SSA
DIAN THEMISFITS
ICHOR ORE SODAS
THEHEIRESS RITE
SEN ORASTIC NUN
ARAN NUGGET
STALIN SPURN
KIROV THESEARICH
INANE WIRE TARE
SABER ONUG STYX

1 Trumpeter Al
2 Man before Eve
3 Greek cheese
4 Reinforced
5 Enter by force
6 Back side
7 River in Tuscany
8 Playwright
9 Coward
10 Metrical foot
11 Grant in Hollywood
12 VCR function
13 Spanish priest
14 Skedaddles
15 Pointed remarks
16 Author Jong
17 Great honor
18 Walkie
19 Little in Lile
20 FBI and ERA
21 Bovine
22 comment
23 Alfonso's queen
24 Ships on sharp runners
25 Cowshed
26 God of thunder
27 Two-wheeled carriage
28 Ivan and Nicholas
29 Frighten
30 Send out
31 Be an omen of
32 French pronoun
33 Chemical compound
34 Latvian capital
35 Leave text as is
36 Butter rival
37 Hockey score
38 Continental prefix

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

KEREC
HYLYS
MOAWED
LAWASY

Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: LOFTY GUMBO AIRWAY ETTER
Answer: What happened when the roster was shuffled for speeding — THE FOWL RAN AFOL.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Planning official prescribes mixture of economic policies to achieve goals

THE MONETARY school under all circumstances is the weakest policy to deal with economic recession which is characterised by high unemployment rate," Yusuf Mansur, the head of the assistance coordination unit at the Ministry of Planning, said in a lecture. Noting that the inflation rate is stable, he also emphasised that the stability of the dinar exchange rate should be maintained because the dinar stability is one of the most important pillars of the economic reform programme.

Mansur explained that Jordan gives high attention to the supply side of the market or the production side which is based on rectifying production imbalances. Consequently, he said, that would improve/increase income, savings and investment as well as create employment opportunities. "However, the analyst should not forget that one of the most misgivings about this school of thought is that it revolves over benefits in the long-term," Mansur said stressing that the fruits of this strategy cannot be reaped immediately and that its effects are minimal in the short-term.

The senior planning official indicated that the reforms recommended by the supply side strategy does not affect directly the worker's pay or the return on capital but rather affects the economy through improving the circumstances that later result in higher wages and better return. He said that this is a process that could be either long or short depending on the variable and the environment where the change occurs.

"At the same time, there should be a review of the policies related to micro-economy so that the amendments would have a direct effect on the economy through upgrading the real labour wages and capital," Mansur said. As such, he added, "what

the economy needs now is a dual application of economic policies whereby the process of reform continues as if the supply is all what we have of economic policies at hand and, at the same time, activate the demand side and other theories as if the short-term benefits is all what is important."

In other words, the market role should be activated for long-term goals and spending should also be widened, deepened and encouraged by the consumer, government or investor even if that has to be accomplished at the expense of higher indebtedness, he said. However, Mansur stressed that the spending should be directed to development projects with high return on the medium and long-term fronts to be able to repay the debt and interest in the future.

Mansur admitted that economic growth slowed down during 1996 and 1997 but noted that indicators improved noticeably between 1990 and 1996 as the structural adjustment and reform programmes are based on upgrading the supply or production side of the economy. Such upgrading covers liberalising trade and removing barriers, liberalising the capital market and the movement of capital and giving the private sector the fundamental role in economic activity. In addition, the upgrading includes formulating the necessary legislations to create an attractive, competitive and advanced investment climate and the adoption of exports promotion policy as the main engine for economic growth.

However, Mansur indicated that there remains a number of steps which have not yet been accomplished such as enacting new economic laws, namely, the anti-monopoly law, and the privatisation process. (A) Arab Al Yawmi.

Outlook turns negative for major U.S., European banks

NEW YORK (AFP) — Standard and Poor's has revised its outlook downward for seven major U.S. and European banks, citing financial pressures persisting in emerging markets.

The financial rating agency lowered from neutral to negative its outlook for Citigroup, JP Morgan, BankBoston, Societe Generale, Banco Santander, Dresdner Bank and ABN-AMRO Bank.

At the same time, Standard and Poor's affirmed its current ratings for the banks.

The agency also placed under surveillance the AA-/A-1+ notes of Spain's Banco Bilbao Vizcaya and reiterated its earlier placement under surveillance of

Deutsche Bank and Bank of Nova Scotia.

"The seven outlook revisions ... are the result of continued financial stress in emerging markets. Events in Brazil are only the most recent manifestation of those problems, and are an indication that the problems are spreading beyond Asia," the agency said in a statement.

"The devaluation of the Brazilian real will put financial pressures on the indigenous banking system and increase the potential for credit losses at those overseas banks with sizeable cross-border and local currency exposure to that country," Standard and Poor's said.

Big oil companies brace for brutal earnings season

NEW YORK (AP) — The weakest crude oil prices in 12 years have sparked massive layoffs and mergers on an unprecedented scale and now, big oil is set to report the largest percentage drop in annual earnings since 1992.

"1998 did not end soon enough for this industry," said Eugene Nowak, analyst at ABN AMRO Inc., who forecasts oil companies' fourth-quarter earnings will be down 60 per cent from a year ago.

This has spurred a series of megamergers and a sign of the tough times is that Amoco Corp., once the fourth-largest U.S. oil company, will not feature this earnings season, having been bought by British Petroleum Co. Plc to form BP Amoco Plc.

This also will be the last full year of results for Mobil

Corp., the second-largest U.S. oil company, which is being acquired by Exxon Corp., the world's largest publicly traded oil company.

Yet as bad as 1998 has been, some analysts are wondering whether 1999 will be any better.

"Without belaboring how pathetic the earnings picture was for the industry, the main point to make is that it does not look any better for the first half of 1999," said Michael Young, analyst at Deutsche Bank Securities.

Young predicted oil companies' earnings will fall 64 per cent in the fourth quarter and 50 per cent in 1998 from the year-ago periods. He also noted that 1998 estimates fell 58 per cent from the start of the year and said 1999 earnings could be 35 per cent below current estimates.

The companies that will post the worst earnings comparisons in the fourth quarter of 1998 are those with the greatest leverage to oil and natural gas, such as Atlantic Richfield Co. (ARCO), which also will suffer from the sale of its chemical operations, and Unocal Corp.

ARCO's fourth-quarter earnings per share are seen down 90 per cent at five cents, according to Deutsche Bank Securities' Young. He also projected that Unocal's EPS for the fourth quarter will be down 91 per cent at seven cents.

First Call Corp., which tracks analysts' estimates, said it expects Unocal to earn eight cents a share in the fourth quarter, down \$5 per cent from the year-ago period's adjusted operating earnings of 54 cents a share. Unocal's full-year 1998 earnings are expected to be 60 cents a share from 1997 adjusted operating earnings of \$2.05.

Lower oil prices and weaker-than-expected production also will push Amerada Hess Corp.'s results to show a loss of \$0.93 per share, before a 50-cent-per-share inventory adjustment, according to ABN AMRO's Nowak.

Most analysts are looking for Amerada Hess to report a loss of 45 cents per share, according to First Call Corp., which tracks analysts' earnings estimates.

The oil industry also will be hit with a raft of write-downs due to the weak oil prices and charges associated with layoffs.

Texaco Inc. last week joined Phillips Petroleum Co.; Conoco Inc., which is still majority owned by DuPont Co.; Hess and Murphy Oil Corp. when it said it would take a \$350 million charge to cover layoffs, lower product prices and a drop in the value of its

oil fields. Texaco also said fourth-quarter EPS would be 13 cents to 16 cents.

Even refining and marketing, traditionally seen as a natural hedge for integrated oil companies, also is expected to be a negative, while chemical business earnings are slumping, due to weak Asian demand and overcapacity.

BT Alex Brown said oil companies' refining and marketing earnings are expected to fall 25 per cent from a year ago.

On the positive side, if such a thing exists in a miserable operating environment, this quarter will see earnings from Conoco, which debuted as a partly independent company after DuPont sold 30 per cent of it last autumn in the highest U.S. initial public offering ever.

Analysts expect Conoco to report EPS of five cents for the quarter and \$1.12 for the year, according to First Call.

Companies with a balance between production and refining and marketing also are likely to report a smaller-than-average drop in earnings. Exxon is expected to report fourth-quarter EPS of 59 cents for the quarter, down 33 per cent from 88 cents per share a year ago.

There are some signs of a price recovery above the \$13-per-barrel level as inventories fall, although it will be the end of 1999 before the global surplus of 200 million to 225 million barrels disappears.

Analysts noted that capital spending cuts will result in one million barrels per day of U.S. production being locked in, which will reinforce output cuts from oil exporting nations, including the members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Schroder & Co. analyst Michael Mayer said economics may be on the cusp of a turn as inventories diminish, Asian demand recovers and production is shut in, due to lower capital spending.

Referring to the "new conventional wisdom" that oil prices will remain mired at the \$13-per-barrel level for years to come, Mayer said that opinion is just as flawed as the preceding view that oil prices had shifted to a higher range.

Yet, the bears still remain to be convinced.

"I feel we continue to witness the death spiral in the industry; earnings will be sharply below expectations, which will reduce cash flow, leading to draconian cuts in capital spending and reduced production. And so it goes on," said Deutsche's Young.

BAe snaps up GEC-Marconi in first wave of European defence consolidation

LONDON (AFP) — British Aerospace (BAe) Tuesday unveiled plans to buy the GEC-Marconi defence electronics business to form the world's third biggest defence group worth more than 15 billion pounds (\$21 billion euros, \$25 billion).

The deal, which values Marconi Electronic Systems at 7.7 billion pounds, aims to create a powerful global player to engage the dominant U.S. producers Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

It is also intended to lay the foundations of a restructured European defence industry and a possible link with the United States.

However, the announcement was an immediate blow to BAe's former German partner, DaimlerChrysler Aerospace (DASA), which said that any Anglo-German link was now "impossible."

BAe chairman Richard Evans stressed that he hoped consolidation would press on across Europe.

"This merger represents an important step in the restructuring of the aerospace and defence industry in Europe," he said.

The formation of the new company, which will have an order book worth 33.3 billion pounds, is intended to achieve annual cost savings of 275 million pounds after three years.

Management expect exceptional restructuring costs of 200 million pounds. Shareholders in GEC will be issued with 36.7 per cent

of the new group's capital. GEC will then be left without its profitable defence arm and will focus solely on telecommunications and consumer electronics.

BAe said that "the merger will consolidate British Aerospace's position as a world class aerospace and defence company, which is expected to be the cornerstone for further consolidation of this industry in Europe."

It added that it "intends to continue discussions with other potential European partners to achieve this."

However, the initial response to the plans was frosty.

DASA, which had held intensive merger talks with BAe late in 1998 said that the deal "will make a merger between DASA and BAe impossible." DASA would be swamped by dominant British interests in such a grouping.

"This is not a European merger and it is likely to make the process of European integration more difficult," a DASA spokesman said in Munich.

French sources also said that the BAe-GEC deal ran counter to plans to create two pan-European core defence entities, one focused on aeronautics and the other on defence electronics.

French defence electronics group Thomson-CSF, which had itself been hoping to strike a deal with GEC-Marconi, called an extraordinary board meeting for Wednesday.

Evans said that the deal would allow BAe to participate in the consolidation of the defence industry "both in Europe and later in any transatlantic groups."

Despite the hurdles that the deal has raised in Europe, Evans underscored the unparalleled gains to be made from the all-England tie-up, citing economies of scale, unified selling overseas and increased export opportunities.

"The combination of these businesses creates a company with unrivalled global reach, world-leading technology and the strength to compete at all levels in the world markets," Evans said.

The chief executive of GEC, George Simpson, said that "this is a shareholder-driven win-win deal" that would allow GEC shareholders "participation in future consolidation moves."

The new company will initially employ 99,500 people, of whom 70,000 would work in Britain. BAe said that while job losses were inevitable, it would seek to keep redundancies low.

The companies hope the deal will increase shareholder returns by 10 per cent in three years. However, the market was cool to the news.

"We are concerned that they have overpaid for the Marconi assets," a specialist trader said. "The price is looking very topy and the fit is not that brilliant."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your plans could be disrupted today, as you worry about a risk you're about to take. Your intuition is better than usual right now, so listen to it. You may not be accustomed to having intuitive feelings at all, but don't worry. That's just your way of accessing information on a subconscious level.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) The sun's going into Aquarius today, in your solar 10th house of career and success. Aquarius is the sign of science and research, which is just what you need. Its not enough to be a good farmer. You also have to understand agri-economics. And you know what? You can figure this stuff out. You might surprise yourself.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your boss, or some other older person you know, is stuck. This could be your golden opportunity. If you can see a place where your talents can be used, you can get the promotion. You could even create the job. It'll take a little research on your part, but that's OK. Go ahead and put your brains to work.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) The sun's going into Aquarius today, and that could influence your money, specifically money you share with others. Looks like there's paperwork involved, too. You'd rather have a root canal than go through the pile of papers you've already accumulated, but don't panic. After you get into it, you may find you have a talent in this area.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You're getting more attention, but not much more money yet. Don't worry. One will lead to the other. If you're a performer, you know how important it is to get out in front of people, but you may be getting a little tired of playing benefits. People are starting to task for you, though, and that's great. Grab every opportunity you get, just for the practice.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) A friend keeps telling you that everything is going to be all right. That serendipitous attitude may be a little annoying. You think your friend doesn't fully understand the situation, but that's OK. That gives him or her a clear, generous, benevolent sort of attitude. Instead of chipping away at that, embrace it.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) The sun's transit through Aquarius exacerbates your natural romantic tendencies. Your ruling planet, Venus, is also in there, and so are Neptune, for fantasies, and Uranus, for electricity. And Mars is in Libra now. That means you're a wildly passionate — yet coolly intellectual — raging beast, inside. On the outside, it's Wednesday, and you have to go to work.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) This is an excellent day for romance, with a cuddly, quiet, gentle, loving, warm, compassionate type, probably a blonde. Just kidding. Could be a brunette. If you've got somebody like that in your life, chances are good you're in the mood for love, settling down and raising a family. But first, perhaps you'd better put in for that promotion.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There are contradictory forces in effect today. One is pushing you beyond what you've ever done, mentally. Physically, you may actually be sick, but its more likely you've just got a lot of energy. This condition can be dangerous, especially if you're working around machinery, so snap out of it. Pay attention to what's going on.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Your primary interest has always been in taking care of others, but the others don't necessarily know that. You're always busy working, but they don't realise that you do it for them. Truth be known, you may find it awkward to relate to other people. Its much easier to stay busy. But you know what? You can learn.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) The sun is going into your sign today, making you stronger, more confident, wiser and even more analytical than usual. And you'll be getting gifts, possibly even today. Looks like something valuable is coming your way. Don't gloat. You could provoke jealousies and upset an otherwise amicable relationship.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Some change is required, but the status quo seems pretty stable. If anyone can do it, you can. There's no shifting the bureaucrats from their do it, you can. There's no shifting the bureaucrats from their positions, but you may be able to find a way around them. If you present your idea clearly enough, others will be drawn to it without even knowing why.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Revlon to cut up to 1,200 jobs

NEW YORK (AP) — Revlon Inc. will slash up to 1,200 jobs, or seven per cent of its work force, as part of a plan to boost profits at the struggling cosmetics giant.

The company also will sell some excess real estate holdings under the reorganization plan announced recently. The efforts expand on Revlon's October announcement that it would close three international plants to save costs.

The restructuring comes amid tough times for Revlon, which is the best-selling mass-market cosmetics brand in the country ahead of Procter and Gamble's Cover Girl and L'Oréal's Maybelline line.

Revlon has been hurt by global economic turmoil, especially in South America and Asia.

Also troubling has been a slowdown in orders from U.S. retailers. Its biggest losses have been at drug stores, with merchants using up existing inventory before ordering more.

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Drugs, cheating and giant-killing dominate Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Steffi Graf, Monica Seles, Martina Hingis and Andre Agassi demonstrated Tuesday how beautifully simple the game of tennis can be.

Jim Courier was more concerned about warning of the dangers of officialdom burying its head in the sand as the Australian Open became dominated by drugs, cheating accusations and giant-killing.

French Open champion Carlos Moya of Spain crashed out in four sets to Germany's Nicholas Kiefer.

Former U.S. Open and Wimbledon finalist Cedric Pioline of France barely murmured as 17-year-old Lleyton Hewitt bounced him out. Six men's seeds failed to survive the opening round.

Anna Kournikova put her beauti-

fully-manicured nails at risk when she played a game of Russian roulette while compatriot Yevgeny Kafelnikov's idea of nail-biting was an intense duel with Jonas Bjorkman which saw the 1996 French Open champion stab and feint his way past the Swede's multi-layered defence.

The 17-year-old Kournikova, who seems to care more about her appearance than her tennis, struggled embarrassingly.

If she had been playing anyone but American qualifier Jill Craybas, playing her first Grand Slam outside the United States, the 12th seed would have been back on the practice courts trying to work out her serve.

Because she served an amazing 23 double faults — 17 in her first five service games — on a windy, overcast

day. The score was 7-6 (7/1), 7-5 in favour of Kournikova but it was difficult to say anyone had won a dreadful match.

The 10th seeded Kafelnikov, who played an amazing 150 matches in 1998 — three times more than Kournikova — strode through 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 against an opponent who actually played seven matches more than him last year.

It was Kafelnikov's fifth straight win over Bjorkman so he has obviously worked out how to beat him. He now plays Australian Jason Stoltenberg in the next round and could improve on his quarter-final appearance here in 1995 and 1996.

A third round encounter with former French and Australian Open champion Courier was on the cards. But Courier was more interested in exposing the drugs cheats.

The former World No. 1, who has now slipped to 77th in the world following his back-to-back wins here and in the French Open between 1991 and 1993, won his opening match against Peter Wessels of the Netherlands, who is ranked 113th in the world.

The American went through 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/0) and now plays Younes El Aynaoui of Morocco.

But of more immediate concern was drugs on the ATP Tour and Courier took the Association of Tennis Professionals to task for failing to grasp the nettle.

"There are some suspicious things going on that I'm unaware of that are not being properly sourced out through our testing," he said.

But countryman Todd Martin, president of the ATP Player Council, would have none of it.

"If there's an opinion it should be shared among the players and the ITF, not the press," he said after coming back from two sets down to beat Brazilian Fernando Meligeni.

The ATP called a joint press conference with the International Tennis Federation on Wednesday to explain their drugs policy.

Petr Korda, last year's champion, who had unleashed the controversy by failing a test for anabolic steroids at Wimbledon last year, was involved in another drama.

His Spanish opponent Galo Blanco accused of him feigning injury when he sprawled onto the court as his left ankle buckled. Blanco felt it gave him time to get his breath back in the third set while play was stopped as he had his ankle taped.

And the Spaniard refused to shake his hand after losing — unheard of in tennis etiquette.

Courier raised suspicions that players were using the EPO drug which improves stamina by increasing red blood cell production.

The drug was at the centre of a storm which engulfed last year's Tour de France when eight of the 20 cycling teams pulled out after police



Anna Kournikova of Russia hits a return to opponent Jill Craybas of the USA during their first round match at the 1999 Australian Open on 19th January. Kournikova defeated Craybas 7-6, 7-5 (AFP photo)

raids discovered supplies of the drug. Korda, the first defending champion, on to he unseeded as he had dropped to 20 in the rankings, refused to talk



Andre Agassi of the USA hits a return to Herman Gumb of Argentina in their first round match at the 1999 Australian Open in Melbourne on 19th January. Agassi easily defeated Gumb 6-0, 6-3, 6-0 (AFP photo)



Carlos Moya of Spain hits a return to Nicolas Kiefer of Germany during their first round match at the 1999 Australian Open in Melbourne on 19th January. Moya won the first set 7-6 and play continues (AFP photo)



Tenth seeded Steffi Graf of Germany concentrates on a backhand return to Paola Suarez of Argentina during their first round match at the Australian Open in Melbourne on 19th January. Former world champion Graf won the match in straight sets 6-0, 6-3 (AFP photo)

According to the players...

MELBOURNE, Australia (AFP) — Jim Courier is always good for quotable quotes On Michael Chang saying he needed a miracle to play Davis Cup this year: "Yes, well he would know if a miracle was going to happen. He seems to have a pipeline."

On whether he was surprised when Petr Korda was linked to steroid use: "He doesn't look like a steroid user, does he? Of all the players I would have suspected, he's certainly the last."

Russian pin-up Anna Kournikova says she's in better physical shape than ever after spending the off-season in the gym.

"I am really happy with my physical shape," she said, after wowing a packed court one.

"I can move well. I can run well right now. I was running every day and working out in the gym and looking after myself, eating a little bit more."

Trouble was she could not serve — whacking

down 23 double faults World No. 4 Pat Rafter has irked tennis officials here with his casual court attire.

The Aussie favourite, who says he was going for the beach look, wore a collarless shirt and dazzling floral shorts in his first round tie.

Officials immediately confiscated the shirt to see if it complies with tour regulations.

"I'm not quite sure if I'm going to get into trouble for that yet," Rafter said. "I was just trying to get the beach look going."

Tour regulations demand a collar.

Seventeen-year-old Serena Williams says she'll be old when she's 22 but she'll be number one.

"Five years from now — I'll be 22. Wow, I'll be old," she says.

"Five years from now I would definitely see myself at No 1, probably for maybe a little while. I'll just take school on and off."

Steffi Graf has thrown

himself into a new cause off court, as co-founder for "Children For Tomorrow."

It is a non-profit foundation aimed at implementing and developing projects to support children who have been traumatised by war or other conflicts.

The foundation aims to provide mainly African children, who have suffered through wars, persecution or violence with the necessary means of support and therapeutic help.

Tournament director Paul McNamee has denied a snub was involved in the decision to schedule Petr Korda's first-round match on court one.

Korda won the Australian Open last year but has been tainted by a drug scandal.

Defending champions are usually granted the honour of a centre-court start, but MacNamee said the schedule was solely related to Korda's being unseeded.

The Barmy Army,

England's rabid cricket fans, are at the tennis, but they're more subdued than usual.

England were playing Sri Lanka at the nearby Melbourne Cricket Ground and the Army decided to come over and give compatriot — Tim Henman their raucous support.

"We can't be as barmy here, we're more chummy than barmy," said David Edwards, on behalf of a group of 30.

Britain's big-seed hope Greg Rusedski was at odds with a loud-mouthed postman and an armed ballboy during his first win over Australian Scott Draper.

A man, whom Rusedski said he knew pretty well as a postman, was screaming unpleasantities at him between points, while the overkeeper ballboy was bouncing the ball around at him for every serve, and he hit him in the head before he asked him to take it easy.

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Sports

Nagano bidders gave Samaranch samurai sword

TOKYO (AP) — Backers of Nagano's bid for the Winter Olympics gave International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch an expensive samurai sword before the city was chosen, the head of the bidding committee said Tuesday.

The disclosure came a day after Nagano Mayor Tsukasa Tsukada, a senior official of the bidding committee, said the bidders also gave an IOC official, whom he did not identify, a painting worth thousands of dollars.

News of the gifts have surfaced since the Salt Lake City bribery scandal fueled questions about possible vote-buying during Nagano's successful bid for the 1998 Winter Games.

Nagano Gov. Goro Yoshimura, who chaired the bidding committee, said Tuesday that the sword was presented to Samaranch in person. Japanese media reports said the sword was given in 1991 and is valued at about 10 million yen or \$19,000.

IOC spokesman Chapman said there

was no record that the sword was part of the "Samaranch Collection," comprised of artworks, Olympic torches and other gifts Samaranch has received over the years. They are kept in an IOC storeroom in Lausanne, Switzerland.

"We don't have any record at the IOC that it exists," said Chapman. IOC officials are not permitted to accept gifts of more than \$150, but Samaranch has said the rule does not apply to him because he does not vote in the selection of host cities. The IOC has said that Samaranch accepts gifts on behalf of the IOC.

IOC officials said Monday that their investigation of the Salt Lake City case will include bids by other cities in recent years. But Yoshimura said he was confident Nagano would turn up clean even if the IOC decides to investigate its bid.

"There are various reports about Nagano's bid, but we have never done anything wrong," he said. "Even if there is an investigation, I believe there will be no problems."

Also Tuesday, the head

of the Nagano Olympic organising committee and the education minister, who oversees the Olympics, both said they had no plans to investigate Nagano's bid.

Makoto Kobayashi, the director general of the Nagano Olympic organising committee, said he had no responsibility in what happened during the bid because that was "totally separate" from running the games.

"It's so annoying. The sparks from Salt Lake are falling on Nagano," Kobayashi said in an interview with The Associated Press in Tokyo.

The Nagano organisers, or NAO, took over after the bidding committee disbanded in 1991. NAO is set to disband in March.

Kobayashi denied Nagano had money to dole out to the IOC.

"All we handed out were towels," he said.

Japan's education minister also dismissed the allegations of vote-buying as "Nagano's problem."

"We have no intention at this time to investigate," Akio Arima told reporters. "We have trusted the local communities."

Villa join Chelsea at the top in England

BIRMINGHAM, England (AP) — Aston Villa moved back into joint top position in the English premier league with a convincing 3-0 win over a 10-man Everton at Villa Park on Monday.

Two superbly taken goals by Julian Joachim broke Everton's resistance after the visitors had defender Alec Cleland sent off in the 11th minute for a second yellow card.

Referee Neale Barry booked Cleland for tripping Joachim on the edge of the area in the 10th minute and the former Rangers full-back got his marching orders just 60 seconds later for a reckless challenge from behind on Dion Doherty.

Everton, with five men in mid-field, set out to frustrate Villa, who needed a 5-1 win on the night to edge Chelsea out of top spot in the table.

They held their own for 40 minutes before Ian Taylor nodded back Lee Hendrie's free-kick at the far post for Joachim to volley home off the underside of the crossbar.

Villa, who led the league for a long time earlier in the season, sent on Stan Collymore for the injured Doherty at the start of the second half.

The outcome of the match was effectively settled in the 50th minute.

Hendrie, watched by England coach Glenn Hoddle, slotted a perfectly weighted through-ball to Joachim who lashed another spectacular angled shot high into



Aston Villa's Julian Joachim jubilates after scoring his side's second goal in an FA Carling Premiership clash against Everton at Villa Park on 18th January (AFP photo)

through injury by firing Villa further in front 12 minutes from time.

Siege Watson headed back Joachim's deep cross for the former Arsenal and Middlesbrough forward to convert from five metres.

The only time Michael Oakes was tested in the home goal was to spare Gareth Southgate's blushes by tipping the Villa defender's attempted clearance over his own bar in the 42nd minute.

Villa manager John Gregory saluted Joachim's match-winning display.

"He has been tremendous all season and keeps telling me: 'you have to pick me every week'. I'm certainly not really in a position to argue with that."

"We've played better but the result was all important," Everton manager Walter Smith criticised Cleland's dismissal.

"It was an ill-advised challenge just after getting booked for the first time," Smith said.

"But it was a poor decision by the referee who never showed any character at all."

Pippen heading to Rockets in sign-and-trade deal

CHICAGO (AP) — Keep the door open, the exodus from National Basketball's Chicago Bulls is picking up speed.

Wah Michael Jordan trading gym shoes for golf spikes, are wasting little time in picking up the six-time NBA champion. Scottie Pippen will be traded to the Houston Rockets with Steve Kerr and Longley following him out the door.

The Bulls will sign Pippen to a five-year, \$67.2 million deal — with an additional \$15 million in incentives — and then promptly ship him to the Rockets. In return, Chicago will get forward Roy Rogers and a second-round draft pick, said numerous league sources who spoke on condition of anonymity.



Chicago Bulls Scottie Pippen is leaving the Bulls for the Houston Rockets under the sign and trade provision of the league's new collective bargaining agreement, it was reported January 19. The Bulls will sign Pippen to a new contract for a reported \$67 million over five years, then trade him to the Rockets for Roy Rogers and a second-round draft pick. Pippen is shown during a press conference following practice in Chicago June 8, 1998 (Reuters photo)

"I am excited about my new career in Houston, and even though everything seems to be changing, I hope Bulls fans everywhere will understand that it is time for a new era to begin in Chicago," Pippen said Monday night in a statement released by his agent, Jimmy Seaton.

"Chicago has been my home for nearly half my life, and with family and friends here I will always treat the city as home. I only hope the city of Chicago will continue to treat me as one of their own. Thanks for all the great memories."

Kerr, one of the best 3-point shooters in the league, will sign a five-year, \$11 million deal with the San Antonio Spurs, according to a source close to the Bulls.

And Longley, the starting center on the Bulls' last three championship teams, was reportedly headed to the Phoenix Suns.

According to newspaper reports, Longley will sign a five-year, \$30 million deal with the Bulls, who will then trade him to Phoenix for forward Martin Muursepp, forward-center

and make a run at some of the others available.

And if those plans failed, the Bulls will rebuild completely.

Chicago is still interested in free agent Brent Barry.

"Jerry is going to target key free agents in terms of being as competitive as we can this year," new coach Tim Floyd said.

"If we are unable to get those guys, we will remain vigilant in his plans to bring it back to the level where it's been. But that could be a process."

Judging by the Pippen deal, it's going to be. Although the salaries for Pippen and Rogers do not match, the deal is allowable under NBA rules because Houston will have enough salary cap room to fit in Pippen's contract. His salary for this season will be \$10.6 million.

The deal won't be finalised until the lockout ends Wednesday or Thursday. He should be in uniform for the Rockets when they play an exhibition game against San Antonio on Saturday.

"We're not going to confirm anything," Rockets spokesman Tim Frank said. "The lockout is technically not over. We're still under lockout restrictions. No deal can officially be done until that clock is lifted."

Pippen, a six-time champion with the Bulls, is considered one of the top three free agents up for grabs as NBA teams prepare to open training camps delayed by the 6-month lockout. The seven-time All-Star forward had talked to the Rockets about signing with them as a free agent, and it wasn't immediately clear why he agreed to a sign-and-trade deal.

The acquisition of Pippen should clear the way for Charles Barkley to re-sign with Houston, giving the Rockets a formidable front line of Barkley, Pippen and Hakeem Olajuwon.

Fans, family gather for party marking Ali's 57th birthday

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Fans and family of boxer Muhammad Ali gathered for an emotional 57th birthday party for the former champ Sunday night, recounting the ups and downs of the man who considered himself "the greatest."

Among those on hand for the event at the MGM Grand hotel-casino was former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, who defeated Francis Bouhu 24 hours earlier. It was Tyson's first fight since being banned from boxing 19 months ago after hitting Evander Holyfield's ears in a 1997 heavyweight championship bout.

Neither Tyson nor Ali spoke to the crowd, although both posed for pictures with fans and family invited to the private dinner party. Ali suffers from Parkinson's disease.

He had shown his support for Tyson by appearing at Tyson's reinstatement hearing before the Nevada State Athletic Commission in October, and being on hand for his comeback fight.

Longtime associate Gene Kilroy

recounted a time during the height of Ali's career when Ali learned a senior citizens' home was having trouble paying its bills. Kilroy said Ali gave the home two checks for a total of \$300,000. When he praised Ali for the good deed, Kilroy said the boxer told him: "Kindness to others is the rent we pay for our time on earth." And he recalled a time when Ali learned a 5-year-old boy was dying of leukemia. He visited the boy before one of his fights and told the youngster "You're going to win your fight, and I'm going to win my fight." Shortly before the fight, Kilroy said Ali received a call that the boy had taken a turn for the worse. Ali and Kilroy drove two hours to the University of Pennsylvania hospital.

Kilroy said when they entered the boy's room, the youngster said "I knew you would come." Ali told the boy he was going to pull through and Kilroy said the boy responded: "I'm gonna meet God and I'm gonna tell him I know you." The boy died three weeks later, Kilroy said.

A film traced Ali's life from his birth Jan. 17, 1942 in Louisville, Ky. as Cassius Clay Jr., to his 1960 Olympic Gold Medal and a career that was interrupted when he was stripped of his title for refusing to register for the draft.

The brash Ali proclaimed "I am the greatest" and said his style was to "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee." Singer Gladys Knight, a longtime friend, praised Ali at the birthday dinner, noting one of her sons was named after him.

"He was not only the greatest outside, he was the greatest inside," she said.

Tyson then helped wheel out a birthday cake in the shape of a boxing ring and Ali helped cut the cake as the crowd chanted "Ali, Ali." Ali's wife, Lonnie, said her husband has been "an inspiration to everyone he has met and everyone he has touched from afar."

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Thompson wins 3 golds

HOBBART, Australia (AP) — American Jenny Thompson won three more gold medals at a World Cup short-course swim meet Tuesday, giving her nine over four nights at two Australian meets.

Despite complaining of tiredness on Tuesday, Thompson won the 100-metre freestyle, 100-metre individual medley and 50-metre butterfly. Her medley time was only 0.36 seconds slower than the world short-course record of 1:00.41 she set in Sydney on Saturday.

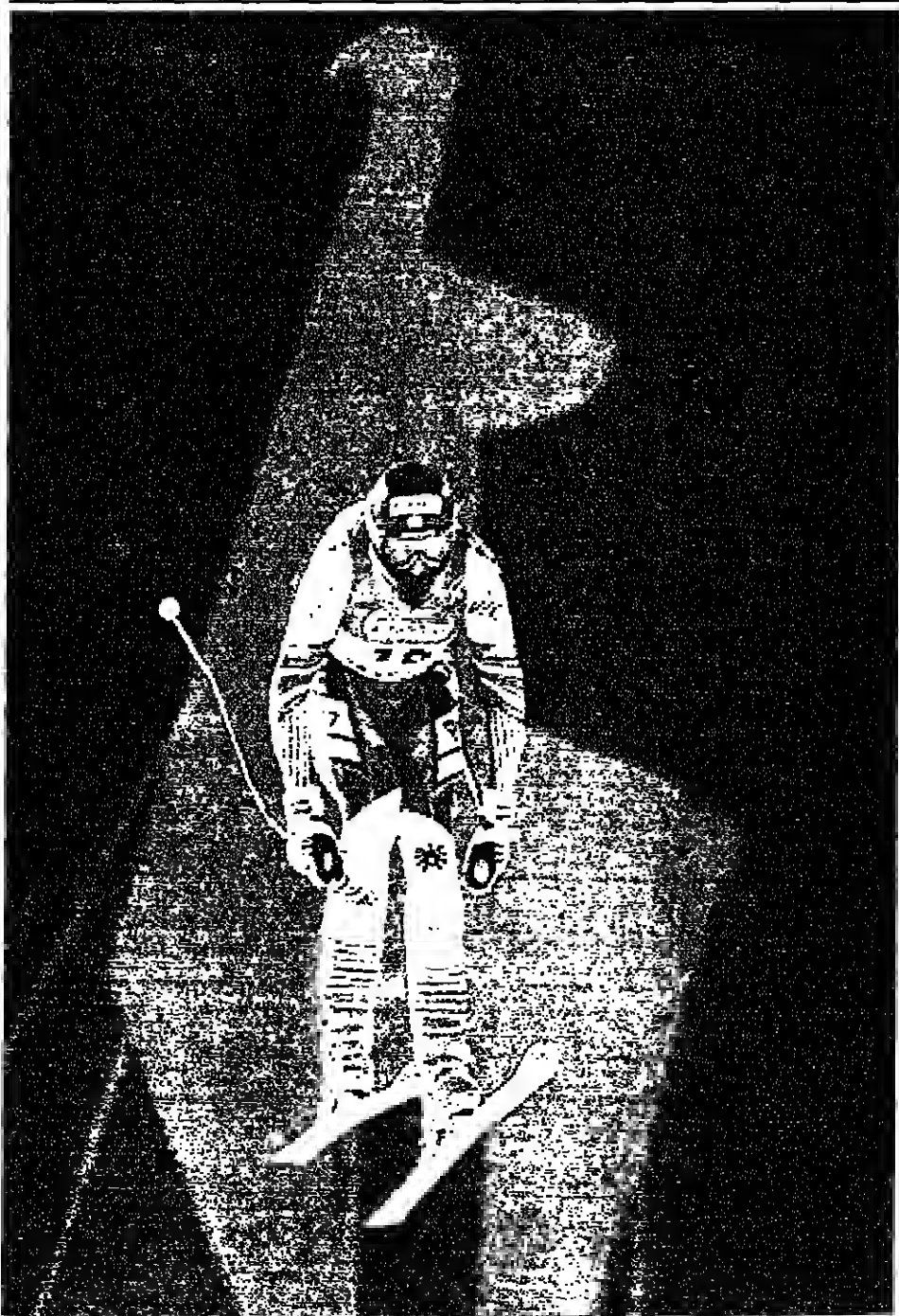
She won five gold medals at the Sydney meet over two nights and one on Monday on the opening night of the Hobart programme.

South African Penny Heyns continued her edge over Australian Samantha Riley in the shorter breaststroke events, winning the 50 metres by nearly a second. Riley later held off Qi Hui of China to win the 200-metre breaststroke.

Ian Thorpe of Australia continued his mastery of the middle distance events, winning the 200-metre freestyle by finishing more than a second ahead of fellow world champion Grant Hackett.

Michael Klim, the Australian swimmer of the year who set himself a particularly punishing schedule in an effort to swim back into form, showed some signs that his hard work is paying off.

Shortly after finishing third behind Thorpe in the 200-metre freestyle, he finished second to Sweden's Lars Frolander in the 100-metre butterfly.



Fritz Strobl of Austria is airborne as he jumps past the statue of the chamois, a heraldic animal of the town of Kitzbuehel, during the first practice for the upcoming World Cup downhill races on the Streif slope January 19. Strobl clocked the fastest time in the training run of 1:55.44 minutes (Reuters Photo)

No big changes planned for race in which six died

SYDNEY, Australia (AP) — Organisers for the 1998 Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race in which six sailors died said Tuesday they plan no dramatic changes for this year's December race.

Cruising Yacht Club of Australia (CYCA) Commodore Hugo van Kreetschmar said he did not expect several inquiries into the fatal race, including the yacht club's own probe, to force wholesale changes.

"Each and every year we run a review of the race and we try and identify things that went wrong, things that could be done better. Problems that arose and each year those things are input into the overall running," van Kreetschmar said.

"I believe whatever changes do occur will be incremental only, not wholesale changes."

A six-member CYCA committee investi-

gation into last year's race would help the race grow in stature in the long-term, he said.

"I think the work of the review group will give people the confidence to go out there and take on Bass Strait again and I think if anything the race will grow in stature as a result."

The New South Wales state coroner, weather bureau and rescue authorities are running parallel inquiries into the race.

Van Kreetschmar said media criticism that the CYCA, which organises the race, would not conduct an objective review of the disaster was unfair.

The CYCA committee was "unashamedly not independent" but its terms of reference had been approved by the coroner, weather bureau, the International Sailing Federation and other bodies, he said.

Van Kreetschmar said in the unlikely event

that the coroner and the CYCA team reached different conclusions, the coroner's verdict would rule.

"The CYCA will never ignore the coroner — we'd do so at our own peril," van Kreetschmar said.

"We couldn't possibly dismiss the findings of the coroner if they differed from our own. The bottom line is that yachtsmen themselves have the most to gain or lose from the outcome of this process."

Van Kreetschmar said a 101-question survey sent to all competitors would provide the basis for the committee's investigations.

Three sailors from the Winston Churchill yacht — Jan Lawler, Mike Bannister and John Dean, all of Sydney — died when fierce gales struck the fleet in the Bass Strait on Dec. 27 and Dec. 28.

